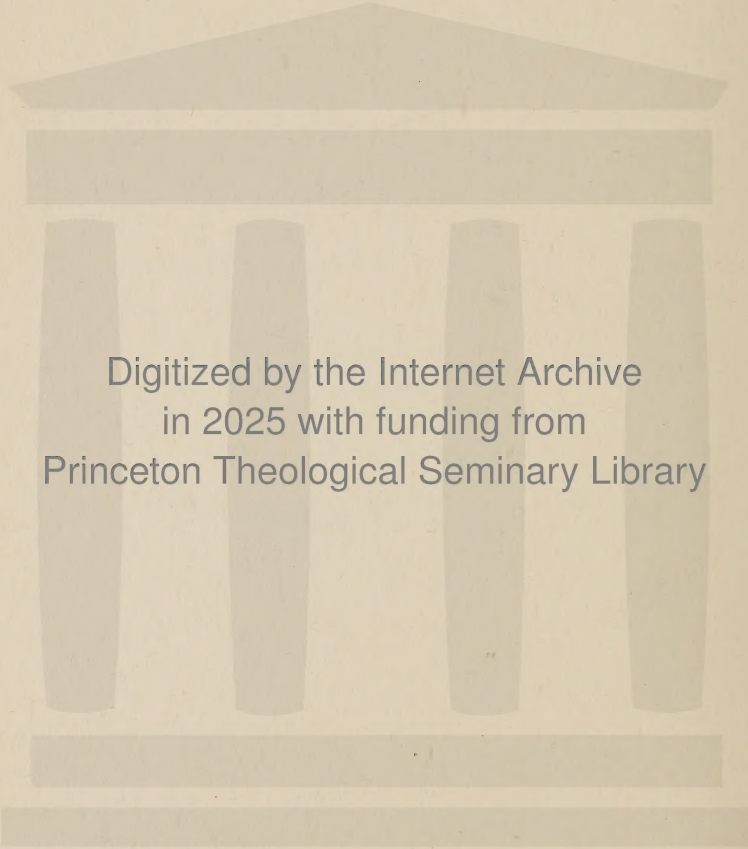


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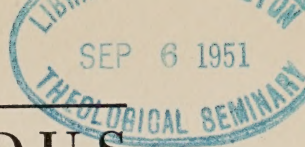
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The Making of Public Opinion

EMORY S. BOGARDUS

The Making of
PUBLIC OPINION

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Preface

To the extent that public opinion is made freely by a people, to that degree are they democratic. At least two things are essential to democracy: One, that public opinion be expressed freely; and the other, that public opinion be made or formed freely. An explanation of the latter aspect is undertaken in this book.

Public opinion that is freely made does not spring fully developed from the head of democracy. Neither does it just happen. It comes about as the result of many complicating factors and persistent struggling on the part of many people. The story of how public opinion is made, except in part, has never before been told.

The first chapter explains the different senses in which the term, public opinion, is used; the second indicates the role that public opinion plays in human society. The next six chapters attempt to answer the question: What makes public opinion? The following chapter explains the sequences involved in the process of making public opinion. Then come three chapters which deal with the limitations and distortions of public opinion. The next two chapters present some of the attempts to understand public opinion by means of measurement and of case studies. The concluding chapter offers a summary in the form of tentative laws of public opinion. Appendix A provides questions for each chapter that discussion groups may consider. Appendix B gives reading lists for each chapter which will accommodate those who desire to acquaint themselves with some of the literature on particular aspects of the making of public opinion.

Contents

Preface

v

I. NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION

I. <i>What is Public Opinion?</i>	3
1. Public Opinion	3
2. Nature of Publics	7
3. Personal Opinion and Private Opinion	8
4. Majority Opinion and Minority Opinion	11
5. Coalition Opinion	13
6. Consensus Opinion	13
7. General Opinion	15
II. <i>What Public Opinion Can Do</i>	17
1. Makes and Unmakes Laws	17
2. Sustains Social Agencies and Institutions	20
3. Upholds Social and Moral Standards	21
4. Vitalizes Public Morale	23
 <i>II. WHAT MAKES PUBLIC OPINION?</i>	
III. <i>Personal Conversation</i>	31
1. Casual Conversational Groups	32
2. Table Group Talk	34
3. The Gossiping Group	36
4. The Whispering Campaign	38
IV. <i>Reading Newspapers</i>	43
1. What is News?	43
2. Influence of Newspapers	45
3. Coloration of News	48
4. Role of Editorials	51

5. Rise of Columnists	52
6. Function of Cartoons	53
7. Decline of Newspaper Influence	56
8. Journals of Opinion and Books	58
V. <i>Seeing Motion Pictures</i>	62
1. Appeals	63
2. Effects	66
3. Newsreels	70
4. Animated Cartoons	71
5. International Roles	72
6. Control of Motion Pictures	73
VI. <i>Listening to the Radio</i>	76
1. News Broadcasts	76
2. Organized Talks	80
3. Radio Across National Boundaries	83
4. Wartime Programs	85
5. Political and Commercial Radio	87
6. Control of the Radio	89
7. Rise of Television	92
VII. <i>Reacting to Education</i>	96
1. Publicizing	96
2. Advertising	100
3. Indoctrinating	102
4. Disseminating	104
5. Teaching	106
6. Educating	107
VIII. <i>Participating in Discussion Groups</i>	109
1. Need for Discussion Groups	109
2. The Discussion Group Movement	111
3. How Discussion Groups Function	113
4. Modified Discussion Groups	118
5. Values in Discussion Groups	122
IX. <i>The Opinion-Making Process</i>	124
1. Impression-Discussion-Decision Sequences	124
2. Action-Reaction-Climax Sequence	125
3. Stages in Opinion Making	127

III. LIMITATIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION

X. <i>General Weaknesses</i>	135
1. Intrinsic Weaknesses	135
2. Lack of Personal Responsibility	141
3. Lack of Social Science Backgrounds	143
4. Language and Thought Difficulties	145
XI. <i>Propaganda Distortions</i>	148
1. What is Propaganda?	148
2. Propaganda Devices	150
3. Earmarks of Propaganda	156
4. Wartime Propaganda	162
5. Control of Propaganda	164
XII. <i>Censorship Barriers</i>	168
1. Censorship	168
2. Censorship of Speech	173
3. Censorship of Press	175
4. Censorship of Books and Periodicals	176
5. Censorship of Motion Pictures, Stage, and Art	177
6. Religion and Censorship	179
7. Censorship Policies	180

IV. MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION

XIII. <i>Polls and Scales</i>	185
1. Public Opinion Polls	185
2. Measuring Opinions	194
3. Intensity of Opinions	195
4. Attitude Scales	197
5. Changes in Opinions and Attitudes	199
XIV. <i>Case Studies of Public Opinion</i>	204
1. The Case Study Approach	204
2. Sample Case Studies	206
3. Significance of Case Studies	220

V. CONCLUSIONS

XV. <i>Conclusions About Opinion Making</i>	225
1. Sequences in Opinion Making	225
2. Tentative Laws of Opinion Making	228

APPENDIX

A. <i>Problems for Discussion</i>	237
B. <i>Selected Readings</i>	246
<i>Index</i>	261

Part I

Nature and Functions of Public Opinion

CHAPTER I

What Is Public Opinion?

EVERYONE IS INTERESTED in public opinion because it is a most influential force in the daily lives of all people. It builds and destroys reputations, sustains social welfare agencies, makes and unmakes laws, builds and undermines social and moral standards, and vitalizes or devitalizes public morale. Although public opinion affects everyone daily, very few persons have given much attention to how it works.

Not only leaders of groups but other people are interested both in the nature of public opinion and also in the process by which public opinion develops. Since democracy depends for its life on the free formation and free expression of opinion, the opinion-making process calls for continual attention by all who would participate in developing a democratic way of life.

1. Public Opinion

Public opinion, as distinguished from the process by which it develops, is the generalized judgment of a considerable number of people on a particular aspect of social life. Public opinion is usually a set of conclusions on a proposal involving social change. It is the end product of a process which is little considered and rarely analyzed.

An understanding of the making of public opinion is essential for the development of methods for controlling it, especially for controlling it so as to develop a democratic society. In fact, in order to understand public opinion on any social problem, it is necessary to have a correct picture of how public opinion developed on the given problem.

Viewed as a process, public opinion may develop as a blind integration of ill-defined personal opinions that have been thrown together more or less accidentally. It may come into verbal expression out of prejudices, as in the case of people

holding race-superiority theories. It may spring into being from bitter experiences on the part of a number of people in a given social situation, such as the exploitation of a working class. It may culminate in hard and fast convictions that will listen to no questioning or no dissenting opinions, as illustrated by extreme totalitarian-minded persons. Public opinion may come about by fiat from the top down, as promulgated by the propagandistic organs of a Germany under Hitler. It may develop through the evolutionary processes of democratic discussion. The processes of public-opinion formation run a wide gamut, but *in this book special attention will be given to the democratic process of making public opinion*, for after all this process apparently is the soundest, most significant, and most lasting means of creating public opinion.

Public opinion, considered in terms of a democratic process, relates to an aspect of social life on which people differ but need to take action. It is a way of obtaining that degree of agreement which is necessary for general action.

The discussion method of developing public opinion means that the participants will need to have before them the major facts that are involved. It implies that they are able to express their personal opinions without inhibition. It assumes that they are free to register their opinions as ripened by free discussion. The process aspect involved in the formation of public opinion is suggested by Albig when he states: "Public opinion results from the interaction of persons upon one another in any type of group."¹ However, Albig does not analyze the vital role that a factor such as discussion may play in the process of opinion formation.

Public opinion may be an enlarged form of the individual opinions of one or more members of a group or it may be the expanded expression of group opinion. In the former instance, it grows out of an opinion expressed by a person who is in rapport with his group and who becomes the voice for the deeply felt but nonverbalized needs of many people, or it may be the propagandistic manifestation of the wishes of an autocratic leader.

Everyone belongs to groups of friends and acquaintances who

¹ William Albig, *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), p. 3.

discuss public issues and who after discussion may arrive at a majority and minority expression of opinions. A current writer on public opinion defines public opinion as follows: "Public opinion refers to people's attitudes on an issue when they are members of the same local group."² However, it is the contention of the present writer that public opinion is not a sum total of attitudes, but an integration of opinions, and that in a democratic group it is reached by a discussion process. Childs gives an unsatisfactory definition of public opinion when he states that it is "any collection of individual opinions designated."³ This definition is very loosely worded. Public opinion is not a mere collection of individual opinions, but the product of a discussion process.

At this point the statement by Herbert Blumer may be noted, namely, that "much of the interaction through which public opinion is formed is through the clash of group views and positions."⁴ Another way of referring to the group origins of opinion-making is that "the diversified interaction which gives rise to public opinion is in large measure between functional groups and not merely between disparate individuals."⁵ This analysis stresses the group's role in the formation of public opinion but minimizes the role of persons with new and original ideas in changing a group's opinion and in giving direction to a group's opinion.

In a democracy every person may have a part in making public opinion. To the extent that each individual has access to the necessary facts and is free to form his personal opinions and also to express freely these opinions, a democratic public opinion functions and people develop the principles both of democracy and of a peace-making world.

To the degree that people are free to develop and express personal opinions they are responsible to make the most of such an opportunity. Freedom carries with it the responsibility to use that privilege regularly through democratic discussion.

² Lawrence W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1948), p. 35.

³ Harwood L. Childs, *An Introduction to Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1940), p. 44.

⁴ Herbert Blumer, "Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling," *American Sociological Review*, 13:545.

⁵ *Ibid.*

If people are not free to think and to express their thoughts freely, they have no democracy. Even in a democracy, people lose their freedom unless they use it. If they neglect free discussion based on access to the main facts on any public issue, their democracy may slip backward into government by lobbies, by propaganda, by coloration and suppression of news, by decisions made behind iron curtains. If people generally do not exercise the privilege of free discussion, they nullify the privilege of voting and forfeit the essence of democracy.

Public opinion has some of its beginnings in the small informal group. It is natural for people to gather in what Cooley called primary groups,⁶ and to talk. While much of this informal group discussion deals with persons and their activities, a very real portion centers on group action and also on the relation of the welfare of the members of the group to public affairs. Thus the making of public opinion by democratic means depends upon the nature of the discussion that every citizen engages in daily in his informal groups of friends and acquaintances.

An informal group may be a small number of people, often not more than half a dozen, who are gathered together on a sidewalk, or in someone's living room, or around a coffee table. There is no plan, no regular meeting place, no repetition of the gathering. On the other hand, a discussion group may have a regular meeting time and its members may select discussion topics prior to the meeting at which each topic is to be discussed so that those who wish may do some reading and thinking beforehand. A discussion group works best if it keeps formal procedures at a minimum. It has no officers in the usual sense, although it may have a leader who is the same or a different person from meeting to meeting. It has a minimum amount of preliminary planning, although the discussion may not necessarily follow prescribed plans.⁷ It draws its materials for discussion from hearsay, from the newspapers and magazines, from the radio, from motion pictures, from propaganda, from dependable educational sources.

⁶ Charles H. Cooley, *Social Organization* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), pp. 23 ff.

⁷ See Chapter VIII for a development of the role that discussion groups play in the opinion-forming process.

2. *Nature of Publics*

If public opinion suggests the expression of opinion by a public, then what is a public? In one sense a public is a number of people who by some means or other hold the same views on a given social issue. The idea of a public is used in a variety of ways. However, a public is considered here to be a large number of people, most of whom are not known to one another but all of whom have at least one major interest in common. One widespread public in the United States today is composed of those persons who are interested in maintaining fair-minded race or ethnic relations. Another has a common interest in developing democracy in industry. Still another public is united in its interest in developing a consumers' co-operative movement. Yet another public has a central interest in developing some form of world government.

Sometimes a public seems to be centered around a person, and the result is a Herbert Hoover public or an Eleanor Roosevelt public. Behind the central personage there is usually a particular interest, for example, in the former instance, an interest in economy in government, and in the latter illustration, an interest in equal rights for all peoples.

When Childs defines a public as "simply any collection of individuals,"⁸ he makes the concept too broad. His definition makes a public synonymous with any group, large or small, of people. It is necessary to be more discriminatory and to view a public as composed of many small groups who have at least one major interest in common.

Walter Lippmann once wrote on "the phantom public," claiming that a public is phantom in its influence. It is belated in getting into action. "The public will arrive in the middle of the third act and will leave before the last curtain."⁹ Moreover, Lippmann claimed that "the work of the world goes on continually without conscious direction from public opinion." While there is some truth in these strictures, a closer examination will show that the weakness does not necessarily lie in the absence of publics but rather in the fact that so many members

⁸ Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁹ Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925), p. 65.

of publics do not assume responsibility for their membership in these publics. Because of ego-involvements and other factors, such persons are nominal but not functioning members of publics.

Another weakness of publics, even of the most active, is the "distant-contact means of communication" between the leaders and the members, and between members. There is little if any interaction between the members.¹⁰ Moreover, most publics are indeterminate in membership and size, that is, no one knows and no one can find out the exact membership of any public. An exception is the determinate public such as the employed personnel of a business firm that does business throughout the United States or the world.¹¹ While its employed public is determinate, its patronage public is indeterminate. Because of this indeterminate character of most publics, leadership tends to be diffused and to taper off into little dynamic significance on the periphery of each public.

3. *Personal Opinion and Private Opinion*

Public opinion is made up of the integration of many personal opinions. Personal opinion may be thought of as an individual's interpretation of a situation concerning which there is disagreement. Opinions have been explained also as "interpretations of available facts, which interpretations are difficult to verify or disprove directly."¹²

To understand the full significance of the origins of personal opinion it may be kept in mind that public opinion is usually formulated out of both group and personal opinions. A person owes the opinions that he holds in part to the majority opinion or to the minority opinion of the groups in which he has lived and has been conditioned. A part of his opinions has come from the opinions of his groups, from his associates in those groups, and from discussions with his fellow-group members. No matter how desirable it may be to have public opinion develop as an outcropping of free and full discussion, it is doubtless true that public opinion on most subjects today is rarely de-

¹⁰ Richard T. LaPiere and Paul R. Farnsworth, *Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1949), pp. 434, 435.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

¹² Carl V. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, Fred D. Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 265.

veloped "consciously and deliberately in discussion." It is often, according to a comment by L. K. Hall, "soaked up" without much reference to the interplay of ideas that discussion in the democratic sense implies. In the future discussion may play a larger role in the formation of public opinion.

If, as reported in a recent study, the political attitudes of persons are first formed in adolescence and the religious attitudes are "most often established in childhood," then the influences of an adolescent's groups and a child's groups on the formation of personal opinions must be great.¹³ Since both adolescence and childhood occur in years in which the individual has little critical ability of his own, he adopts or accepts the opinions of others, that is, of the groups in which he is being conditioned.

Many of the origins of personal opinion, and hence of public opinion, are exceedingly subtle, that is, highly subjective and elusive, often unrecognized by the person himself. For example, even the social class to which a person belongs may have something to do with canalizing the attitudinal bases of his opinions.¹⁴ In other words if you know with what social class a person identifies himself, you know that many of his attitudes are probably organized in and around his class ideology and that some of his opinions will be likewise canalized.

Another important approach to the study of personal opinions is found in the field theory,¹⁵ as developed by Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippitt, and others. The experimental studies in group dynamics relate largely to small face-to-face groups rather than to large-scale publics, but they are exceedingly promising in throwing light on the origins of personal opinions and prejudices. In the study of group dynamics techniques are being developed "for collecting quantifiable data on attitude patterns and social motivations," for analyzing values and ideologies that are being communicated today through mass media, and for "measuring efficiently the structure of interpersonal rela-

¹³ Isager Holger, "Factors Influencing the Formation and Change of Political and Religious Attitudes," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 29:201-210.

¹⁴ Cf. Arthur Kornhauser, "Public Opinion and Social Class," *The American Journal of Sociology*, LV:333 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Kurt Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Concept, Method, and Reality in Social Science; Social Equilibria and Social Change," *Human Relations*, I, No. 1:5-41.

tions.”¹⁶ Group dynamics is also producing significant findings regarding the nature of prejudice and related bases of personal and public opinion.

Personal opinions seem to comprise a large part of one's expressed thinking. Since persons cannot be sure of many of their ideas, they really live in a world of opinions of their own and of their associates. A young woman who kept a record of her opinions arrived at the conclusion that she was “infested with opinions.”¹⁷

Behind personal interaction as a source of personal opinion there is the whole field of culture. Every group acts in terms of its culture patterns, which are composed largely of what are commonly called traditions and customs. These are widely expressed in the institutions of the home, the church, the school, and so on. In other words, personal opinion is to a great extent institutionalized opinion and culture-based opinion. Sometimes the facts are not at hand and a person expresses his opinion as to what he thinks is the truth of the matter. Sometimes the significance of the facts is not evident and a person gives his opinion as to what the available data signify.

Persons express their opinions in terms of their own experiences and their limited knowledge. As these vary in nature from person to person the statements of personal opinions will likewise be different. As personal opinions are usually formed on definitely subjective bases they are likely to be in error.

Four factors have been noted by A. M. Lee in his analysis of personal opinion, namely: (a) the specific stimulus-event that elicits the opinion; (b) the cultural backgrounds of the person as related to the stimulus-event, and (c) as influenced by the current situation including related vivid incidents; and (d) the person's distinctive experiences.¹⁸ Likewise, Lee points out that a public opinion or a group opinion is the product of five factors, namely: (a) the stimulus-event; (b) the common cultural

¹⁶ Ronald Lippitt, “The Strategy of Sociopsychological Research,” in James G. Miller, editor, *Experiments in Social Process* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1950), p. 20.

¹⁷ Quoted from Floyd Allport by H. D. Lasswell in his *Democracy Through Public Opinion* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1941), p. 48.

¹⁸ Alfred McClung Lee, in Roucek and Associates, *Social Control* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1947, p. 392).

background of the group or public as related to the stimulus-event and (c) as influenced by the current situation; (d) the cultural backgrounds of influential sub-groups; and (e) "the characteristics of such opinion-crystallizing or forming mechanisms as leadership," control of communication, and chance factors.¹⁹ It will be noted that these factors distinguish public opinion and group opinion from personal opinion.

Since private opinion is one of the most important aspects of personal opinion it may be scrutinized at this point. Private opinion is that part of personal opinion which is not expressed openly. It is kept under cover by a person lest he lose status or at least be misunderstood. One's private opinion is generally withheld because it would make its exponent unpopular, and yet it often represents the real person, his inner reactions, his fundamental attitudes. It may be aired in a very select group of friends, when one is sure that he is speaking off the record, or when there are no wires nearby to be tapped. It plays an indirect role in influencing one's openly avowed opinions, and it finds a direct avenue in deciding the results of a public issue when an individual stamps or votes his secret ballot at every election throughout the nation.

4. Majority Opinion and Minority Opinion

Public opinion is used in many senses. Its most common interpretation is in the sense of a majority opinion, which is expressed or apparently felt by more than half of the members of a group. If formed out of free and full discussion a majority opinion indicates that democracy is in operation. On this basis it means that group attention has been given to a given social problem, that discussion has occurred, that individuals have influenced each other, that issues have been weighed, and that each person's opinion has been accorded an importance along with that of every other member of the group.

A majority opinion does not always mean that democracy has spoken. It may have been reached through distortion and deception of facts, through suppression of facts, or through inadequate discussion. A majority opinion may be composed of the opinions of many ego-involved persons. It may act to suppress minority opinion. A majority opinion may behave autocrati-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

cally, unless it be the expression of democratically minded persons and is put into effect by a democratically minded leadership. It is socially important that a majority opinion represent the opinion of democratically minded persons and that it be preceded by democratic discussion methods.

A majority opinion may be composed of several different minority opinions. These may not work together well. For example, a political majority or plurality in a given election may represent several groups, such as a farm group, a labor group, a Negro group. As soon as action-measures are proposed the majority opinion may fall apart. Its unity was not intrinsic but opportunistic and hence superficial.

A majority opinion, once expressed, may go to sleep. Unless kept active by discussion a majority may turn its attention to other matters and fail to follow through. Its members may turn aside to their individual affairs and leave the carrying out of their majority decision to an inefficient few.

A majority opinion is generally accompanied by a minority opinion. The minority may be ignored by a dominant majority. It may even feel the lash of suppression. Its role may be little understood.

A minority opinion is a conclusion reached by less than half of an interested group. It has been said that a minority opinion today may be tomorrow's majority opinion. Since a majority may once have been a minority, today's minority opinion may be considered thoughtfully by the majority because some day it may supplant the current majority opinion.

A minority opinion is important also because it represents those whose opinions are currently balked. If these opinions are accompanied by deep sentiments, the minority may go to work with renewed determination and seek to win "next time." While the majority opinion may be satisfied with its victory, the losers may be reorganizing to capture enough public support to turn it into a majority.

A minority opinion may represent the people at the extreme right or left or both. It may be a reactionary opinion, or a radical opinion, or both. If so, it is very difficult to change. It is exceedingly averse to listen to reason and to take part in discussion groups.

5. *Coalition Opinion*

Sometimes a group has no majority opinion, but several minority opinions. France has suffered more than once from a situation in which there were several political groups, each with its own more or less well-defined opinion. In order to effect any action at all it is necessary for some of the minority opinions either to the right or to the left or in the middle to throw their forces together and produce a majority opinion, which, in this case, is called a coalition opinion. Usually a coalition opinion, like a majority opinion that is composed of heterogeneous units, breaks down when the time for action comes. One of the minority opinion constituents will favor one type of procedure, another minority group another type, and so on.

Coalition opinion rarely develops into a closely integrated majority opinion. The coalition is due to a force of circumstances exerted from the outside and not from an inside free discussion of the best possible conclusions or procedures. When the outside pressure is released, the coalesced majority opinion tends to fly apart.

On the other hand, Sweden in 1950 had no majority political party but a coalition government that seemed to possess strength and endurance because the minority parties had an underlying loyalty to the nation and a national morale which gives vitality to coalition. There is an emphasis on "a middle way" in Sweden which keeps coalitions from splitting up into extreme right and left wings.

Coalition opinion is a danger signal. It signifies that not enough objective discussion of fundamentals has occurred and means that democracy is endangered. It is a temporary patchwork instead of a democratically developed unity based on deliberations regarding what is for the best interests of the larger group for which the coalesced opinion is acting.

6. *Consensus Opinion*

The most important type of opinion created by discussion groups is what may be called consensus. Consensus means common consent, and hence is more than majority opinion. When the chairman or secretary of a discussion group announces that a consensus has been reached he means that most, if not all, of

the members have agreed to certain conclusions. He is reporting not a majority opinion but a unanimous or near-unanimous opinion.

The strength of consensus may be its weakness. When all agree, further attention may sag. The carrying out of consensus may be left to a few; the rest may neglect their responsibility. The chief preventive of this tendency is more discussion, particularly about the details of putting the consensus into action.

Consensus also refers to the way that a decision is reached. The process is truly democratic and represents the discussion group in its finest expression. In ordinary democratic procedure ending in a majority opinion and a minority opinion, the pros and cons are presented. There is debate, and sides are taken. Partisanship is at the heart of the process. Spokesmen for the affirmative and negative sides present their arguments and in so doing each is tempted to exaggerate his side and belittle the opposing arguments. Thus, the actual truth may be obscured by both sides. If feelings are engendered in the heat of the process, truth is blurred and objective considerations are defeated. The partisans may tend to identify themselves with their arguments and personalities may become involved. The belief develops that to lose for one's side is to lose one's status.

In a search for consensus entirely different attitudes may function. Perhaps the best way to understand the nature of public opinion that is based on consensus is to consider the aims and methods that are involved. The main aim of each member of the group is not to win for one side or for the other, but to win for the truth. The method is for every member to present whatever facts and whatever carefully considered opinions he may have developed pretty much as a council of physicians engaged in diagnosis would do. The point is recognized that every question has several sides and that all need to be presented. In reality there are as many sides to a question as there are participating discussants, for each considers the issue from his own unique experiences and philosophy of life.

In opinion based on consensus each member of the discussion group is seeking the best solution to a problem. Each puts the interests of the larger whole to the fore. Each keeps calm, cool, and objective. Each avoids stressing personalities and personal advantage.

The consensus method gives the most timid and reserved members of the discussion group full voice. All the facts and weighed opinions are put on the table. The discussion proceeds until not a majority but all, or nearly all, agree that one decision or procedure, everything considered, is the best or the only thing to do under the circumstances.

While the consensus method is democracy at work on its most scientific and objective levels, it has not received the recognition it deserves. Self-interest, emphasis on debating methods, personality differences, lack of understanding of the democratic process—these are some of the factors which hinder democratic discussion from achieving its best results.

7. General Opinion

Most discussion groups function within the large framework of what may be called the general opinion in a community. This is the established opinion that has arisen in the past uncritically out of traditions and customs. It comes from those folkways which are considered essential to the group's welfare, that is, from the prevailing mores. It is ordinarily accepted in the early, uncritical years of life and passed on from the older to the younger generation. Inasmuch as general opinion is the child of no particular method, the discussion of it must depend largely on definition of the situations in which it functions.

General opinion has the group's sanction behind it. Hence, to question it is to question the group's right to exist. To question it is to seem to attack the group itself. To question it is to run the risk of being considered disloyal.

General opinion is illustrated by the opinion favoring monogamy in many lands, or by the opinion favoring polygamy in other areas; by the opinion favoring free enterprise in the United States, or communism in the U.S.S.R.; by respect for the Stars and Stripes in the United States, or for the Tricolor in France. General opinion is not to be questioned. It is the milieu within which most discussions take place.

At first thought general opinion may be confused with majority opinion. However, the distinction is great, for general opinion, as the term is used here, is not based on discussion. There has been no decision or other democratic expression. It represents the culture setting within which most majority and

minority opinions rise, have their day, and pass away. General opinion permeates the social atmosphere and is as common as the air which one breathes.

Taboos of all sorts exemplify general opinion in its negative aspects. The taboos against indecent language over the radio and against interracial marriages in the South illustrate the nature and effectiveness of negative general opinion. Taboos put a damper on public discussion.

The importance attached to the role of general opinion is indicated by a term which is sometimes used to designate it, namely, preponderant opinion.²⁰ Upon careful scrutiny general or preponderant opinion is found to be exceedingly dominating in public life. It functions from beneath the surface of opinions. It is often imbedded in well-established sentiments. It is culture-based. Since it has something of the sacred about it, it controls with an invisible but iron hand.

General opinion is the social field within which a great deal of personal opinion, group opinion, and even public opinion originates, becomes dynamic, and undergoes change. General opinion furnishes what has been called the "social climate," so influential in making and unmaking leadership.²¹

A major point at which general or preponderant opinion is vulnerable is in a small discussion where personal opinions are expressed "off the record," where opinions are not made public, where private opinions may be freely expressed, and where objectivity may reign with reference to the most subjective aspects of public opinion.

Thus, public opinion in its soundest aspects is the product of small discussion groups;²² for these may tackle all aspects of public life; they may place all the facts on any question on the table; they may consider any question freely on its merits; they insist on objective methods of examination; they call for free, frank and full discussion of any issue; and they may achieve approximate unanimity of judgment or proposed action.

²⁰ W. Brooke Graves, *Readings in Public Opinion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1928), p. XXVI.

²¹ Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippitt, and R. K. White, "Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created 'Social Climates'," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 10:271-299.

²² See Chapter VIII for a fuller treatment of the role of discussion groups in opinion-making.

CHAPTER II

What Public Opinion Can Do

TO THE DEGREE that public opinion is freely formed and fully expressed democracy can function. If a people are free to express their opinions after having full access to the facts pertaining to issues of public interest and after giving full consideration to these facts, then democracy can flourish. Public opinion (1) gives sanctions to laws, but without its support laws are dead letters. It (2) sustains social agencies and institutions. It is (3) the leading force that maintains social standards and (4) the chief morale-building force in the community.

1. Makes and Unmakes Laws

Public opinion makes laws and enforces them, but is not in turn directly made by them. Public opinion is the stuff out of which laws are naturally made in a free, democratic society. If laws without the support of public opinion are dead letters, what is the punch that public opinion possesses? If written laws follow several years behind public opinion, what causes the delay, is the delay wise, and what can fill in during the interim that arises before laws come into action?

In a free world there is much talk about human needs, about delayed recognition of these needs, and about further delay in finding out how these needs may best be met. Out of this talk, the sharing of opinions, the rise of a majority public opinion, there develops a demand that certain things be done. This demand is the sanction that gives public opinion its punch. There is a recognition that if a large number of people are to work together to achieve certain goals, rules are necessary. Moreover, everybody knows that if disputes arise there must be recourse to something definite and available to all, and hence laws are written out in statute books.

To keep laws effective they either become an integral part of

tradition and customs, and hence are observed habitually, or else a continual educational process is carried forward. Otherwise the support of a general public opinion or of a majority opinion will fall away and the law in question will no longer be observed. Education is necessary in order to secure the needed democratic sanction for a law, and also to maintain adequate support of it until it becomes an accepted part of the mores and habitually observed.

Law does not create public opinion. It cannot obtain by force a natural public-opinion support of itself. Law first and public-opinion support afterward is an unnatural sequence. A forced public opinion offers no support at all, for it disappears as soon as force or might is removed or overthrown.

When a majority opinion obtains the passage of a law it tends to turn its attention to other matters. Promptly a live minority opinion may redouble its efforts and acquire enough momentum to nullify the neglected law. Eternal vigilance is not only the price of liberty, but also of keeping good laws adequately supported by public opinion.

The passage of the Volstead Act in 1920 was not followed up with a continual education of the public regarding the significance of leaving intoxicating liquors alone. A zealous opposition increased its efforts in the form of a widespread and overwhelming propaganda to the effect that liberty was infringed upon, and built up a counter public opinion that demanded the repeal of the law. As Woodrow Wilson said, "It (Volstead Act) was the wrong way of doing the right thing."

Totalitarian countries reverse the natural processes or rather they ignore them. They allow no free public opinion and no free passage of laws. Decrees and orders are issued, and stool pigeons fly to the task of putting them into operation by use of threats and concentration camps. The only basis for popular action lies in overthrowing the totalitarian leaders at great expense of life and property.

In a totalitarian state there is no real law-making body, only a rubber-stamp assemblage. There is no spontaneously free public opinion, just crowds of zealous devotees. There are only decrees and orders, and purges.

William McDougall once said that law and lawyers may be a

generation behind public opinion.¹ This generalization may no longer be true or it may be an exaggeration, but its basis is found in the fact that many lawyers are trained to rate precedent highly, and think lightly of changing public opinion. To them the resting of a law on public opinion would be like building a house on sinking sand. But the analogy is not the whole story, for current public opinion may be an expression of a real need for new laws.

McDougall is also responsible for the assertion that the most progressive body of law embodies the public opinion of a past generation.² Again exaggeration may have been utilized in order to drive home a point, namely, that laws trail public opinion by years. The lawyer may counter with the statement that it takes time for public opinion to become stabilized and that for laws to follow immediately on the heels of an expression of public opinion does not allow enough time for public opinion to be tested and carefully weighed. However, the delay is often unduly long, and needless human injustice may be incurred.

Public opinion reaches far beyond written laws in influencing behavior and affecting personal opinions. Its informal nature gives it an area of influence vastly larger than that reached by written rules which must wait on debate, passage, and enforcement. In this connection, Edward A. Ross has outlined several points, some of which will be noted here.³

Public opinion is less mechanical than law. It adjusts itself to all kinds of situations. Its flexible nature enables it to render judgment on situations that have passed away before laws can be applied to them. It possesses a sting that may be unknown to formal rules.

Public opinion strikes at motives. It does not hesitate to pronounce judgment on motivation. Whereas written laws shy away from motives, public opinion boldly attempts to regulate the subjective aspects of behavior as well as its overt nature.

Public opinion may be characterized by immediacy. It may act at once, and wait for no lengthy court sessions. It does not

¹ William McDougall, *The Group Mind* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), p. 265.

² *Ibid.*

³ See Edward A. Ross, *Social Control* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), Chapter X.

tarry while lawyers consume time in argument. It scorns technicalities and jumps to conclusions.

2. Sustains Social Agencies and Institutions

Without the sustaining power of a favorable public opinion, the role of any public agency in a democracy will shrink, if not shrivel up. In order to thrive and grow any public or private institution that functions in the name of democracy requires a measure of public good will. A private agency that must have financial support and conduct an annual campaign for funds requires a favorable public opinion. To obtain the needed finances without good will is almost impossible. Hence, most such agencies are vigilant regarding their reputations in their respective communities. An agency with a dishonest officer or inefficient management or a board of trustees hopelessly divided over policy or with greatly disgruntled clients soon loses its standing. Without status in the eyes of the community, a social agency cannot thrive if it can survive at all.

One of the best ways for a person to study the process of opinion-making is for him to consider what is going on in his own community. If he will look about him he will find opinion-formation, both positive and negative, taking place at a number of interesting points. New proposals for civic betterment are being made, campaigns for this improvement or that are being inaugurated or are under way, local or state or national political issues are coming to the fore, this women's organization or that men's club is planning a new community activity, and so on. The leaders in these organizations are wondering how they can obtain the needed support. In every case a favorable public opinion is necessary and a variety of methods are being put into operation in order to secure this support.

If there be 10,000 or more social and civic organizations, large and small, voluntary and official, throughout the cities, towns, and rural communities in the United States needing the assistance of public opinion, then there are perhaps a million representatives of these organizations and of all their varied committees who are engaged in the process of opinion-making or who are at a loss to know why public opinion is so lukewarm toward what they consider to be of community value.

Other factors being equal, that institution has the least diffi-

culty which stands highest in the eyes of the public. Hence social institutions—health, educational, religious—safeguard their reputations rigidly, and if possible keep any unfortunate happening in their work out of the newspapers. Some report any and every effort that reflects credit on their respective institution or agency to the press, and by story and photograph build up a favorable public opinion. They want no gossip to spread about any of their personnel and no weaknesses in their organization to be spread abroad in their given communities. If their reputation is once undermined by true or even false reports they have difficulties in again acquiring a favorable public opinion. Back of all successful social organizational activities functions the invisible but sustaining power of public opinion—a power which requires continual stimulation from all social institutions that seek to grow and to serve.

3. *Upholds Social and Moral Standards*

Public opinion is one of the four major forces that make social standards. The four as given by McDougall are might, customs and traditions, public opinion, and reason.⁴

a. Might originated first, and continually seems to function behind the group scene, especially national scenes.

The old saying, Might makes right, bluntly summarizes the situations where war and other uses of force determine what has to be accepted as "right." No matter how unjust the rules set up by the great god Might, his verdicts have to be accepted by the defeated as final, at least for the time being.

"Might makes right" is a statement which means that force, physical and psychical, decides what is to be accepted as right, even though there be no justice in such decisions. Of course, underneath this adage another and more far-reaching one may also function, namely, Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right, meaning that might does not settle anything or determine any standards of right in the long run of the centuries.

b. The second level of social standards is that which is made by custom and tradition. If might-made morality is no morality

⁴ William McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: John W. Luce and Company, 1914), pp. 181 ff.

at all but chiefly forced behavior, then morality made by customs and traditions is definitely more human, but it is usually the result of the indoctrination of the young and the uninformed and supported by culture patterns. It is universal in all ages and all climes and among all peoples. It functions immediately behind public opinion and plays a role in making public opinion.

Customs-made standards stem from the mores, and hence have a great deal of force behind them. The mores are at times all-powerful and brook no discussion. They may be as inconsiderate and unjust as might.

Customs-made morality comes out of the past and resists social change. It has all the force of accumulated human experience behind it, and it may sweep aside all new claims to a different or a better style of life. It is a universal resort of vested interests which may permit no modifications in social standards even though social change has long since left them antiquated.

The close relation of the mores to morals is well known. The mores are those ways of doing and thinking which are judged to serve the welfare of the social group. They are presumably those folkways that are "right" for group survival and hence vital to the welfare of all the group members. They continually attempt to dictate public opinion.

The mores develop by no scientific methods, but in a hit and miss way. The leaders or the special interests with the greatest emotional energy may have given them support. They come into power very slowly and tend to live long past their usefulness.

The mores of a hundred years ago may be totally out of date today, and yet they may rule with an imperious hand, especially in all so-called backward countries, and in some ways in all countries. This tendency may explain why some countries are backward, and why others are full of contradictory moral standards.

Morality made by customs and traditions has long flourished in such fields as religion and law. Both look to the past for their standards, and both ward off any serious modifications of established standards as long as possible. In both, the past easily takes on something of a hallowed nature. In fact, traditions are

the current expressions of the dominant public opinion of the past, and on that basis often demand current allegiance.

c. Public-opinion-made standards represent a third level. They have all the strengths and weaknesses of public opinion itself. Everyone has at some time or other observed or felt the force of group opinion. If it has been adverse, the individual long remembers it, for only the most courageous person can stand out against the opinion of his face-to-face groups. He is called a heretic or a traitor, he is ostracized; and he may be jailed, or even executed. If he defies group-made opinion, his own day and age give him little credit for honesty and sincerity and they may not even consider the possibility that he may be right and that the group may be wrong.

Group-opinion morality, like the two levels already discussed, may be quite unscientific in its origins and in its actions. It may arise out of the crowd psychology of a hoodwinked public. It may stem from the clever scheming of a propagandist-directed leadership.

It has been claimed that public opinion is the "most effective sanction of moral conduct for the great mass of men." Public opinion is current, acts on the spot, listens to no arguments, administers immediate punishment, or offers praise on the moment. It permits no delay.

The rewards and punishments alike of the great dictator, public opinion, loom large because of their immediacy in execution. They shut out perspective, they are dangled so close to the eye of man that they overwhelm.

Praise or blame are the language in which public opinion outlines behavior and announces moral standards. Praise or blame raises or lowers status, the prized possession of personality itself. Public opinion makes morality through the immediacy of its appeal and through its influence directly on personality itself.

d. The fourth source of social standards is reason, which means that morality is carefully thought out. The merits and demerits of a proposed course of a behavior are examined thoroughly and all sides are carefully weighed. A proposed social action is considered both close at hand and in perspective. It

is scrutinized both in time and place and outside of time and place.

4. *Vitalizes Public Morale*

Morale may be defined as the interest in and enthusiasm for a group by its members. A favorable opinion by the members of a group for the values of that group gives it morale. A strong, united public opinion among the members means a high morale. If public opinion weakly supports the values of a group, or if public opinion is divided into two bitterly antagonistic public opinions or into several minority opinions and no majority opinions, morale is at a low ebb. If a majority opinion will not support the values that a group represents, then morale is low. The support of public opinion is essential if there is to be any public morale.

In 1940, A. T. Steele, writing from Peking, quoted North China's Japanese-controlled press to the effect that "the United States is a soft, pleasure-drugged nation, and hence is doomed to defeat in war."⁵ It was contended that public opinion in the United States would not support a war with Japan because in peacetime it had failed to build a public morale, but the real situation in the United States was greatly misjudged.

Public opinion has no difficulty in building morale when the group's members work and live under just conditions and fair remuneration, that is, when they have working conditions that are pleasant and living conditions that are decent, when they have a sense of security—security in work, in home, in health, in old age, in saving, and in something that they consider worthwhile—and also when they have a sense of freedom.

Public opinion builds a lasting morale when, in addition to having the necessities and some of the amenities of life, the people are morally sound and spiritually alive. By "morally sound" is meant personal integrity and social responsibility. By spiritual life is meant the identification of life with values beyond those that can be achieved today or this year, with values beyond this life itself, with values including the welfare of mankind and a Divine purpose.

Public opinion has difficulty in building morale if those who are giving their all for their group feel that in the group there

⁵ For the *Chicago Daily News Service*.

are shirkers, pseudo-patriots, and profiteers. Not equal sacrifice is demanded in a democracy, but equitable sacrifice, that is, in proportion to ability and position—as a basis of morale.

Students of public opinion have a practical interest in the measurement of the morale of a group. John Harding has suggested a plan for measuring civilian morale.⁶ He speaks of morale in terms of “a whole-hearted, decisive resolution to achieve given goals, and by spirited, unyielding, co-ordinated efforts in the direction of these goals.”⁷ Not all parts of a nation rank equally high in morale regarding a particular issue, even in time of crisis or war. These variations occur according to economic level, nationality background, religious outlook, geographic location. It is extremely important at times to know where the weak spots in a nation’s morale are to be found.

Harding has charted sixteen points for measuring morale, such as: awareness of objectives, agreement with objectives, determination to achieve objectives, confidence in leaders, confidence in the news, satisfaction with the ways of approaching the objectives, unity within the group, feeling of participation.⁸ Harding boils these points down to three, namely, reasoned determination to achieve the objectives, confidence in leaders, and traditional values. While this plan for measuring morale and the accompanying analysis are far from complete, they possess helpful suggestions for understanding the difficulties facing public opinion as a morale-builder.⁹

If public opinion bears public morale on its broad but unstable shoulders, it must maintain the group against enemies, not only from without but also from within. Enemies from without are recognizable, but the termites that bore from within may live and undermine unrecognized.

One of these inner enemies that public opinion must combat is the tendency of many people to put partisanship above patriotism. It is true that people may call their partisanship by the name of patriotism, and in many cases be sincere in so doing, but that does not mean that morale is strong. Extreme

⁶ In Hadley Cantril, *Gauging Public Opinion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), Chapter 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

partisanship breeds two opposing public opinions which divide and weaken a group's morale.

Writing in the Los Angeles *Times* for September 12, 1940, a reporter refers to the scenes in a preview theater when the likenesses of President Roosevelt and of Wendell Willkie, the two leaders in the race for the presidency in the fall election of that year, were flashed upon the screen. "The Roosevelt supporters booed and hissed Mr. Willkie; the Willkie fans booed and hissed the President. Both men had something to say—but they couldn't be heard over the audience's uproar." Such exhibitions of partisan group opinions are indications that a united morale was lacking. Too many diverse interests in a nation and too many opinions may prevent the rise of a strong majority opinion. Strong partisan opinions may prevent the recognition of common ground.

The condition of France, in 1950, is a case in point. France has traditions, loyalties, pride; but for years she has had too many opinions, too much partisanship, too many economic and political schisms, and too little united morale. She has become divided into too many antagonistic politico-economic publics. When one public is in power, two or three other publics are attacking it. When a nation's belief in freedom has allowed it to become too individualistic and has permitted antisocial practices to separate people, then public opinion is weak and helpless and democracy is endangered. Public opinion cannot build group morale out of hyper-individualism.

Another internal enemy that public opinion sometimes faces appears when the "haves" and the "have-nots" are arrayed against each other. If the middle class dwindles, the other two main classes in society glare at each other, and then fall upon each other. Two gigantic warring public opinions function where one is needed. When they do not close ranks and move forward, they defeat internal morale.

When the "haves" and "have-nots" fight each other, they tend to develop such hatreds that even a threatening enemy from the outside may not cause them to unite. One side starts a riot, and the other side calls out the militia. With every volley from the government's guns, national morale is shaken. Hence it is important for public opinion to develop support for an economic system that will spread out the earnings of a people

to all the people equitably and decentralize economic controls and responsibilities.

Inefficiency in government is often a nemesis of a passive public opinion. If it is true in an individualistic democracy that what is everybody's business is nobody's business, as Aristotle once suggested, then graft will flourish in many places and morale will be weakened.

Another enemy that public opinion must combat is a lack of social vision of people, both high and low in social status, educated and uneducated. When even persons of wealth and hence of great social responsibility, or persons with years of professional education, cannot see beyond their individual interests or outside the economic welfare of the special interests which employ them, then the chances of maintaining morale are few.

In a democracy a major function of public opinion is morale-building and morale-maintaining, but there are many forces engaged in destroying morale, and without morale, there can be no group existence for long. The people in a democracy need to be continually informed and alert regarding the significance of an undivided public opinion on public welfare and to direct their thinking so as to promote morale consistently and without dilly-dallying.

However, in a democracy, special publics can play an essential role. These represent minority group opinions. By respecting the opinions of these, a nation, for example, keeps on its toes as it were, makes progress, accepts changes, develops new strength, and avoids atrophy at the core. However, the people of a democracy must be on guard at all times that minority public opinions do not dominate the majority public opinion. In peace time especially, it is very easy for special interests to develop such powerful currents of supporting opinion that public morale may be undermined.

The functions of public opinion in a democracy involve maintenance on the part of all of sacrificial attitudes, of beliefs that democracy will be extended further into the economic and industrial life of a nation, of procedures whereby class distinctions will be lessened and resentment-provoking and revolution-arousing conditions will be alleviated, of a continual increase in every phase of life of fair play and of the co-operative spirit.

Part II

What Makes Public Opinion?

CHAPTER III

Personal Conversation

CONVERSATION IS THE COMMONEST and the oldest social mechanism by which opinions develop, are expressed, and are spread. In a recent work on the need for a functional world organization the author asks: "What can you, personally, do to hasten the coming of a federal world government before it is too late?" The first of two major answers that he gives to this question is this: "Talk about the need for a federated world to all your friends and acquaintances. Keep on doing this as long as they are willing to learn, and as often."¹ In other words, a man who has given serious consideration to the best way to get an adequate organization of all the various human groups around the world puts foremost the technique of talk on the part of one individual to another individual. He concludes by summing up his thought on this subject as follows: "Public opinion is a coral reef, the cumulative effect of multiplied millions of individual opinions."² The analogy may not be accurate but the idea which it is designed to convey is that talk by one person to another person is invaluable in changing the plans of whole groups of people regarding the future welfare of the race.

Public opinion in a local community usually has origins in informal conversations. Someone suggests an idea to be put into action, others respond favorably, and a committee meeting is called. At this meeting the merits of the original idea are canvassed and if they stand the test of discussion, another meeting is proposed and the human needs that are to be met by the suggested new organization or by the proposed new developments in an established organization are considered. Two sets of correlative plans are needed: one deals with obtaining an

¹ Vernon Nash, *The World Must Be Governed* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 11.

² *Ibid.*

expanding favorable opinion and the other with obtaining financial support. The first need is the greater, for with it the financial support will come, and without it only forced results may be expected.

1. Casual Conversational Groups

Everyone takes part several times daily in small conversational groups of relatives, friends, or acquaintances. In this way a great deal of personal opinion originates and is passed around. When the millions of such conversations every day in a nation are considered, their role in forming bases of public opinion is evident. If 100 million persons participate in at least ten casual conversational groups every day, a billion of such conversations daily occur in the United States alone. Even if not more than one out of ten of these conversations bears a relation to community and public matters, the role of the casual conversational group cannot be ignored.

The fact that it is a person who is talking makes talk interesting. The added fact that nearly every conversation centers about persons gives added vim to the conversational group. Nearly every subject, even so-called abstract ones, is given a personal turn in casual conversations. Thus, personal talk is influential because it is expressed by persons about persons, and everyone may have some leadership influence.

Organized conversation may set a whole community "buzzing." Everyone is first of all informed, and second stimulated to ask questions if not to endorse. Organized conversation utilizes one of the leading ways by which individuals influence one another, namely, by personal contact. Nothing equals the personal interest and the personal touch involved in conversation, which if carefully and thoroughly organized may reach most of the people concerned in one community after another.

An important sequel follows in the form of group meetings in homes, in classrooms, in schools, in club rooms, in neighborhood or branch libraries, in lodges, in churches. In all these places, topically organized conversation, or talks, are given, forums conducted, questions answered. Small group meetings are followed by mass meetings where through more organized talks enthusiasm is engendered, and the arousal of favorable public opinion is secured.

The study of public opinion may best be undertaken in a local community. All the volunteer and professional leaders of local community enterprises have had some experiences with community opinion. They know that in developing a new welfare program, such as organizing a community chest campaign, it is necessary to have a favorable public opinion. They realize that without this support such campaigns fail. But not many of these tens of thousands of civic-minded and public-spirited leaders throughout a nation, such as the United States, have given much consideration to the nature of public opinion or of the opinion-making process.

Moreover, in the development of a public opinion favorable, for example, to a chest campaign, it is safe to say that hours of discussion enter into the procedure. Public opinion is above all else a product of countless conversations.

If these conversations be organized their influence in the public opinion field may know no limits. Several persons agree to tell others about the needs of a social institution and of a plan to meet these needs. These persons promise to tell still other persons, and to enlist the support and participation of the members of other social institutions.

Organized conversation may take the form of making lists of workers who will agree to go from door to door in various neighborhoods and tell the story of the given institution's needs and of the plan to meet these needs. A number of people may agree to sit down at their telephones and call a dozen persons each and relate to them what is being planned. Others will sit at their desks and talk to their friends through the written letter. Thus, a vast momentum of attention, interest, and support may be stimulated through organized talk.

The greater a talker's experience and the more he is respected, the more far-reaching his influence on the opinions of others. When an informed person begins to talk, his opinions spread widely from individual to individual and from group to group. His influence may be overly expansive, for his opinions will be sought on many topics concerning which he knows little. A talker's influence will also depend on his power to persuade, that is, upon his ability to give what he says a plausible ring.³

³ C. R. Miller, *The Process of Persuasion* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1946).

Personal talk about leaders of public opinion makes or un-makes them. It may initiate changes in public opinion. It may boost an unworthy cause or it may undermine a worthy cause. An unfortunate chance remark by a leader may be spread on the wings of public opinion, be exaggerated and misunderstood, and lose an election for an eminent candidate. Personal talk may change the leadership of a group and even redirect the course of public opinion on the most important of social issues.⁴

The casual conversational group may give attention not only to persons but to important topics of the day. It may tackle any public question. This procedure costs no money, loses no time, and functions day and night everywhere.

Topical talk may be partisan and propagandistic. It may misrepresent and deceive. It may resort to coercion, threats, intimidation. It may be so steeped in prejudices that it cannot recognize the truth.

On the other hand topical talk may represent fact, careful studies, logical interpretations. It may insist on tested premises and proceed without the use of fallacy. It may be objective, scientific, and expand the horizons of thought of one person after another, giving them adequate bases for forming sound opinions. Talk about topics is clearly related to public opinion but talk about persons is more exciting and although indirect it may influence public opinion more effectively.

Talk is usually geared to the intellectual level of its conversational group. If the group is low-minded it will indulge in gutter-life stories, but if its group is highly trained it is likely to engage in technicalities and high-brow disquisitions. In either case it may reap a harvest of changed opinions.⁵

2. Table Group Talk

Basic discussion occurs in the eating or table group. Whether it occurs around a primitive fireplace or about a modern dining table, the discussion process operates in one of its most effective as well as universal forms. This setting may be well-nigh perfect, for the eating group is informal and relaxed; its members are

⁴ E. L. Godkin, *Problems of Modern Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), p. 221.

⁵ Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1873), Ch. V.

enjoying themselves in one of the most elemental ways known to man, and hence their tongues are loosened. The common meal usually brings all the members of the family together at least once a day in a pleasant mood. Discussion runs a wide, unplanned gamut.

The table group is not appreciated in its daily functioning across the nation and around the world as a discussion group. Because of its semi-private, off-the-record nature, persons speak their minds more or less openly. Eating and drinking together creates a pleasing atmosphere within which persons are especially subject to influence by their table companions. The spirit of companionship boosts the role of discussion.

Along with its congenial atmosphere and universal nature the table group has unusual characteristics which make it an especially significant discussion group. It ordinarily represents individuals of various ages, persons who have had different experiences each day, and varying viewpoints. The members assemble from their respective daily activities and freely exchange interesting experiences and opinions.

The table group is controlled to a degree by the elders. They have priority on talking. Inasmuch as they have seen many years of life their observations and biases are not easily overthrown by the younger members. Their prejudices are likely to furnish the framework within which evaluations are made of both personal and public affairs.

However, youth may have their innings in table group discussion. Youth bring in new and explosive ideas from school or college, from sophisticated acquaintances, from other young people's groups. Youth may challenge the beliefs of the elders. They may rock the boat of discussion.

Then, there are the children, too young to enter into the discussion or to have a recognized opinion, but not too young to respond when discussion is expressed in feelings. A basic impression on a child may come to the surface in the opinion arena years later. A father and mother joined in tense conversation at the dinner table may not be affected so deeply as the silent and immature but alert listeners. A child who sits paralyzed while his father recounts how his life was endangered in a race riot and how he saw some of his friends brutally beaten may never escape the effects upon his emotional life. By the repeti-

tion of similar accounts at the dinner table a child's later ideology may be shaped. Psychology has brought enough evidence to the surface to indicate the lasting effects of early emotional experiences upon the evaluative mechanisms of later life.⁶

The conversation of a table group is likely to be channeled along preconceived beliefs. It is conducted within a framework by similarity in thought processes. While it may seek new truths, it prefers to confirm opinions, to endorse previously expressed beliefs, to reinforce acceptable dogmas.

A dining group of Republicans or of Democrats "talk up" their own theories when they get together. They boost their own "platforms." They laugh or make insidious remarks about the opposite group. Faint-hearted members are given courage, and the particular ideology is cheered as though it were perfect.

Table group discussion is continually and everywhere raising or lowering the status of persons. It helps to build or destroy causes. It augments or undermines reputations of leaders of public opinion. It gives life to the opinion-making process.

3. *The Gossiping Group*

In a way, the gossiping group is one of the most significant of all discussion groups. It is important not only because of its universality but also because of its negative and destructive influence on the reputation of any person, no matter how eminent he or she may be in community and public life. Gossip is talk which reflects adversely on the reputation of persons who are not present to defend themselves. It takes unfair advantage of absentees.

Gossip is often deadly in its social and public effects because it is a pastmaster in the use of insinuation. To insinuate is to suggest that something is bad without offering proof. It stirs up the listeners to accept all sorts of untrue rumors about a given person's life. If this person is a public leader, gossip may undermine the favorable opinions of him.

Gossip lives on indefinitely. It seems to have many lives. Its besmirch may turn up several years after its first expression was

⁶ Percival Symonds, *Dynamic Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949), Ch. X; also Charles Berg, *Deep Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1947).

voiced. It cannot easily be traced back to its source and not all its black spots can be erased.

Gossip is an Anglo-Saxon word in origin—*godsibb*—meaning a relation or sponsor in baptism. From the noun came the verb, to gossip, or to act as a familiar friend and to tell inside news by one person about another. The subject matter of gossip hence is highly personal, and as such is easily magnified. Originally, gossip referred to interesting phases of a person's life. The intimacies were not necessarily either bad or good. They had no ulterior motivation. According to Richard Le Gallienne, an English and American man of letters of the present century, "Gossip neither means that you are very great nor very beautiful, nor even very bad; all that it means is that you are very interesting."

However, the temptation to tell about the behavior of another that which belittles him is too much for most people and they succumb. The foibles of the great man and woman and the petty weaknesses of any one furnish savory bits of news, that is, of gossip.

The gossipier who can tell exciting bits of the private life of a well-known person achieves special status. He becomes the center of attention. Persons hang on his words. As the creator of opinion he experiences ego inflation.

The next step is natural and easy, to tell that which reflects on the character or at least the reputation of another. Even friends become careless of one another's reputation at this point, and many a candidate for public office indulges in exaggerating adverse reports about an opponent.

The mere retelling of a bit of gossip leads to exaggeration. Either enthusiasm for or dislike for another person explains the additions that gossip rapidly accumulates. The desire to tell a good story and the excitement of being the resultant object of attention sometimes explains the false elements in gossip. The sheer play of a lively imagination adds to the fiction and augments false opinions. In fact a "gossip" has been defined as a person "who has a fine sense of rumor."

To lower the reputation of others even slightly is enough to boost one's own reputation by contrast. Thus, many persons glory in tearing down, for by indirection their own reputations go up.

Dorothy Dix claimed that gossip is one "of the most powerful influences for good in the world."⁷ Its influence for good is exerted in the form of fear. It is an "indivisible, omnipresent policeman" ready to grab and lock up anyone who strays from the beaten paths of acceptable behavior. Fear of creating a scandal and an adverse public opinion keeps many a "trembling wretch in order and makes the weak-kneed and the wobbly walk the straight and narrow path."

It is the combined opinion of neighbors and friends that many people fear and that keeps them upright. "We can stifle the voice of conscience," and we can convince ourselves that we should make our own code of conduct, but we cannot compel the community of people in which we daily live "to take our point of view in these matters," and we cannot stop adverse gossip from piling up an avalanche of opinion against us. It does not matter, to quote Dorothy Dix again, "how vain and egotistic" we are, or "how self-complacent and self-satisfied," or how independent and brave we think we are, "we are for the most part cowards who grovel in the dust before public opinion."

4. *The Whispering Campaign*

It is but a step from gossip to a whispering campaign. The latter is a definitely planned program of a small organized gossip group to undermine the reputation, sometimes of a candidate for office or of a prominent person, in order that the interests behind this underhand procedure may come into power. A whispering campaign is based on the social psychology of rumor. A rumor is a statement that may have some alleged authority behind it and that is spread because it tears down somebody's character or because conversely it indirectly builds up the status of those who spread it or of the agency or a cause represented by those who pass it on from person to person.

Gordon W. Allport contends that rumor "grows shorter, more concise, more easily grasped as it spreads."⁸ The number of details declines rather sharply at first and then more slowly. The

⁷ *Evening Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, September 28, 1925.

⁸ Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman, *The Psychology of Rumor* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), pp. 75 ff.

leveling off process is illustrated by a J-curve, which is steep at first and then flattens out. About 70 per cent of the details are dropped out "in the course of five or six mouth-to-mouth transmissions." The process thus may be characterized by a certain degree of sharpening of points that are likely to be overemphasized and exaggerated out of all proportion to their original form. While many of the elements in a rumor are dropped as the retelling proceeds, the few that remain are greatly magnified. A statement that is started as a report suddenly becomes told as the truth. It is enlarged upon through wishful thinking. Rumors are answered by counter rumors and thus rumors may fly thick and fast, with people tending to believe those which are in line with their own interests.⁹ Gossip travels on the wings of rumor and multiplies itself into an organized whispering campaign.

It is evident from the foregoing presentation that rumors differ widely not only in subject matter, but in fields in which they spread, and in the conditions under which they thrive. One writer boldly asserts that the conversations that take place between persons "consist largely of rumor," that is, of hearsay and unestablished facts. In this sense, rumor may be defined as "a specific proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without being supported by reliable standards of evidence."¹⁰ From this point the student of rumor and of its relation to public opinion may go on to ask what is the amount of rumor that is functioning in any community at a given time. It has been suggested that this amount will vary with the importance of the subject to the individuals concerned multiplied by the ambiguity of the evidence pertaining to the topic at issue, and that the relation between the importance and the ambiguity is multiplicative, not simply a matter of addition.¹¹

Rumor, upon which whispering campaigns depend, has been defined as "a complicated product of mental activity involving the transmission of a report from person to person which in the

⁹ R. H. Knapp, "A Psychology of Rumor," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, VIII: 22-37.

¹⁰ Herbert M. Schall, Bernard Levy, and M. E. Tresselt, "A Sociometric Approach to Rumor," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 3:121 ff.

¹¹ Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman, "An Analysis of Rumor," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10:502.

transmission is subjected to the special interests and the emotional biases of each reporter of the rumor."¹² A remarkable study of rumors in the field of race relations has been made by Howard W. Odum. He has collected over 2,000 rumors that were set afloat in the South (United States) during the first year and a half of World War II. The analysis reveals many important facts about the nature of rumor. For example, a rumor is composed largely of emotional reaction, it is told indiscriminately as the truth, and it is applied to a whole race.¹³

The development of "rumor clinics" occurred during World War II. They are designed to examine the sources of each rumor as it appears in a given community and to explain what truth, if any, lies behind it.¹⁴ In this way the people of a community may treat rumors for what they are worth—and no more.

A whispering-campaign group often develops a plot. Shrewd persons get together, or are employed, to pick out some misstep of a leader or alleged questionable behavior, and to play it up so as to turn unsuspecting and gullible people against the particular person.

Sometimes a whispering campaign is started late in a political contest. The victim is doubly victimized. There is no time for him to disprove the allegations, and if there were time a large part of the harm could not be offset or overcome. The last-minute campaign of this sort is the most difficult of all to meet.

Sometimes an honest or worthy deed of an intended victim is distorted. Sometimes an accidental occurrence is turned against the subject. For example, if a person is seen talking to a questionable character, even though merely asking the location of an address, the incident is spread in such a way that an unfavorable relationship is suggested, and unsuspecting readers or listeners jump to entirely unwarranted conclusions. Occasionally the exponents of this form of underhandedness become deliberate manufacturers and disseminators of vicious lies.

Exceedingly harmful is that type of whispering campaign which deliberately leads a worthy person into a trap. A person may be induced through an urgent appeal to his sympathy to

¹² R. R. Masani, "Rumor," *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, III:192, 199.

¹³ Howard W. Odum, *Race and Rumors of Race* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1943).

¹⁴ R. H. Knapp, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

lend aid to a stranger who turns out "to have been planted." For instance, a disreputable person may pretend illness at the right time and place and a leader of note may be induced to render aid, whereupon the latter runs the risk of being falsely labeled a keeper of disreputable company.

Worthy causes are likewise attacked by a whispering-campaign group who may center their attention upon the leaders of the best causes. If a leader can be besmirched, then the cause for which he is fighting is beclouded. Since some leaders are easily mislabeled, righteous causes may be defeated.

A cause may be damaged by labeling it what it is not. A frequently used device in the United States is to pronounce any proposed social improvement a communistic scheme. Such false labels are believed by the unthinking, or prejudiced, and are difficult to correct.

So common, so deliberate, so vicious have whispering-campaign groups become that many worthy men and women refuse to become candidates for office. They are not willing to have their characters covered with blotches. They refuse to allow the good names of themselves and of their wives and children to be dragged in the slime of unfair rumors. Probably the ideal behavior of an angel is not above being beclouded by a determined whispering group.

Democracy is vulnerable at the point of whispering campaigns, because of its principle of free speech. Reckless talk has free reign in a democracy up to the point where it can be proved to be slander. A whispering campaign may crucify freedom of speech. Democratic discussion groups are at the opposite pole to the insinuations of both gossiping and whispering groups, when it comes to developing sound public opinion.

Personal-conversational groups are especially significant in opinion-making because they thrive on value-judgments, because they are subjective and involve feelings and emotions, and because they are personality-centered. "In the last analysis," says Lazarsfeld and his associates, "more than anything else, people can move other people."¹⁵ Although social scientists avoid making value-judgments, personal conversation is full of them. Since they may be made freely and without adequate sup-

¹⁵ Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Associates, *The People's Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 158.

port, they may constitute a large and dynamic aspect of opinion-making. They represent a serious weakness in the development of reliable opinion on public issues, but they can be tested by democratic discussion based on objectively obtained and verifiable data.

CHAPTER IV

Reading Newspapers

NEWSPAPERS BEAR a dual relation to opinion-making. They reflect public opinion, and they also make opinion through the printing and through the coloration of the news, through editorials, through the opinions of columnists, and through cartoons. Because of the weaknesses of newspapers as opinion-forming agencies, periodicals specializing on the presentation of opinions have developed. Magazine articles and books also play a major role in influencing public opinion. Therefore, the following questions will be considered in order. What is the news? How does the newspaper influence opinion? What is coloration of the news? What is the nature and influence of the editorial? How are columnists opinion-makers? How do cartoons affect opinions? How do the weekly journals of opinion affect public opinion? What is the relation of the reading of books to opinion-making?

1. What Is News?

The news is plural of the new. It is the opposite of the old, of that which is known, of the understood. News twelve or twenty hours old is not news to the regular reader of the modern metropolitan newspaper. To such readers the news is any happening not over six hours old.

News is not all the new. There are so many new things happening in every nook and cranny of human society that no newspaper could find room enough for them even if it did not reserve a large amount of space for advertisements.

News is the unusual, the different, the abnormal. A divorce is news but 100 happy marriages are not. A bank robbery is news, but many well-managed banks are not. A Communist employee of the Atomic Energy Commission is news, but 65,000 loyal American employees are not. A church member caught

in a vice-raid is news, but a million honorable church members are not. Therefore, it must be kept continually in mind that the news represents a distorted picture of the total life of society. It presents the abnormal, both below and above the normal. Millions of readers fail to keep this pattern in mind. Above all, the news must be interesting to the reader, that is, it must involve the reader's universe of interest and attention.¹

Some news is more important than other news, but by what yardstick does a newspaper choose? How does a newspaper sort out the news that it decides to publish in terms of the more important and the less important? Which news shall be headlined on the first page and which shall be tucked away on the eleventh page? A far-reaching import for opinion-making is inherent in all these decisions.

How far do the readers choose the news? It has been said that a newspaper publishes the news which it thinks its readers want. Moreover, if a newspaper puts its "crime" news without large headlines on the second page, and a competing newspaper spreads "crime" news on the front page, the latter is likely to have the larger circulation. Many years ago a Los Angeles newspaper put news fit for the home on the front page, but many readers shifted to a competing newspaper which put melodramatic headlines and stories about crime on the first page. Thus, the public influences the choice of news that is published, as well as being influenced by the selections that are made.

What about the claim of a newspaper that it "prints all the news that is fit to print?" The slogan suggests two conclusions. One of these is that a part of the news is not fit to print. But what is meant by "fit to print?" Some news is too indecent, too risqué, too shocking to the moral sense. Other news is too horrible, too blood curdling.

The second conclusion is that certain news items would offend the government, or a church, or an advertiser. News that reflects discredit on a powerful advertiser would be hard to print by the newspapers whose advertising pages are regularly patronized by such an advertiser. How is the reader to know which newspapers print the largest percentage of the news that is fit to print? How does the reader learn whether a news-

¹ Kimball Young, *Social Psychology* (New York: F. S. Crofts and Company, 1944), p. 460.

paper lives up to its fine slogans? How can a newspaper reader know what news is not printed?

2. *Influence of Newspapers*

The press, as newspapers collectively have come to be known, came into prominence during the anti-slavery agitation preceding the Civil War, as pointed out by Giddings.² The next forty or fifty years the newspaper was the outstanding instrument in developing public opinion. Almost single-handed it performed this service.

During this period of pre-eminence the newspaper was "the mouthpiece of a commanding personality." It was built up around a Charles W. Dana, a Horace Greeley, a Henry Watter-son. The owner and editor were one person, and he took pride in developing a newspaper that stood for his own best ideals. People had confidence in what the newspaper printed because of the reputation for fair play and breadth of view of the owner-editor. The newspaper was great because of the personality that made it.

For a long time the press shared its major role with the platform in molding public opinion at election times. Political spellbinders held sway during pre-election days in the United States in the presidential elections of the last half of the nineteenth century. Mass meetings, preceded by marching bands and parades, found their natural climax in the political orator. But as soon as an election was over, the "extras" leaped to the front before all the votes had been counted, and the newspaper once more assumed its leadership in the public opinion realm.

Several years ago Charles H. Cooley described the newspaper as a sociability organ and an instrument for creating a sense of community. It helps people to get acquainted with their neighbors in its "personals," and with their leaders in its news columns. It continually introduces the best and the worst people to the average people.

The newspaper is a medium of exchange of opinion, of facts, of behavior phenomena. It is a mechanism that both creates and destroys opinions. Its choice and treatment of news decides

² Franklin H. Giddings, *Principles of Sociology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1896), p. 140.

whether favorable opinion on a given subject is to be made or unmade.

The newspaper is a molder of conduct. In order "to get their names in the paper" and thus receive status in the eyes of public opinion, many people will go to great effort in rendering community service. They will sacrifice ease and comfort for a time in order to be acclaimed by the press and thus to climb the favorable opinion ladder. On the other hand, through "fear of publicity," many people refrain from discreditable behavior. Public opinion through the medium of the press holds a whip hand over many people who otherwise would yield to serious temptations.

Charles H. Cooley also describes the newspaper as an "organized gossip" mechanism.³ It picks up reports and allegations and spreads them far and wide daily. Its reporters must work fast. They must do their investigations in a few hours, and throw real research for the truth to the winds.

Five characteristics of the newspaper as an "organized gossip" mechanism, according to Cooley, are copiousness, designs "to occupy without exerting the mind," appeals "to superficial emotions," lack of trustworthiness "except upon a few matters of moment that few are likely to follow up and verify," and "a maximum of commonplace information for a minimum of attention." While a part of the influence is primarily to the good, there is also much that creates confusion, misrepresentation, and prejudice, and hence befuddles public opinion.

The newspaper is also declared to be a mechanism that represents wealth-interests.⁴ Since it is owned by men of wealth or by organizations representing millions of dollars, it is naturally not going to undermine its own financial strength. It is not likely to welcome inquiry into many economic questions. It cannot afford to antagonize "big advertisers," who long ago became known in newspaper offices as "sacred cows." Thus, it is likely to present a one-sided view of the news.

Working people by the millions have come to feel that they cannot get a full and proper hearing in the modern newspaper. They have arrived at the belief that newspapers are a class in-

³ Charles H. Cooley, *Social Disorganization* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 84.

⁴ *Ibid.*

stitution, and that they, being without adequate means, are helpless to build up a class mechanism of equal power. Many of them contend that through the newspaper wealth controls a major avenue to the minds of men.⁵

It may also be true that the newspaper is no better and no worse than the people who read it. People are partisan and party-minded. Norman Angell once said that if certain newspapers had "to live on the patronage of readers prepared to hear both sides, those big concerns would be utterly bankrupt."⁶ Aside from the independent voters, that is, apart from those who are not party devotees, there are millions of people who read their party organs and none other. What Socialist reads a Republican newspaper regularly? What Republican reads a Socialist newspaper consistently?

All this leads to another question: How is an enlightened public opinion to be developed if one third of the people wish to believe only one viewpoint on a vital issue, and another third only another viewpoint? Not only on political matters, but on economic and religious matters as well people are also badly divided and likewise greatly limited in their sources of new information.

Perhaps as a result of the aforementioned conditions, newspapers have become advocates and "ceased to be indexes or mirrors of public opinion."⁷ Since so many people are one-sided in their views it is natural that newspapers become partisans, and that in so doing they both reflect public opinion and influence public opinion—in partisan ways. Walter Lippmann has asserted that newspapers reflect and to a degree "intensify the defective organizations of public opinion." Hence, "public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound."⁸ The newspaper functions as a representative as well as a maker of the partisanship and the prejudices of people.

⁵ E. C. Hayes, "The Formation of Public Opinion," *Journal of Applied Sociology*, 10:6.

⁶ Norman Angell, *The Public Mind* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1927), p. 130.

⁷ E. A. Ross, *Social Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 352.

⁸ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), p. 32.

3. *Coloration of News*

By coloration of news is meant the deliberate playing up of certain phases of news items and the covering up of other phases. Coloration of news is distortion or slanting of news. Slanted news generally involves a specific direction and the special interests that are favored in the slanting procedure.

Coloration may be natural and innocent. It may be impossible to give space to all phases of a news event. Certain phases are deemed much more interesting to the reader than other phases. It is also true that every news writer has his own standards of good and poor news and is entitled to use his judgment, subject as it is, to all the frailties of human nature.

Coloration of news emanates from the policies of the newspaper itself. Some of the policies may be well-founded and broadspirited. Some may express a real interest in the welfare of human society. Some may represent honest and sincere aspirations to serve the welfare of the largest number.

Then, there are policies which spring full-blown from the heads of greedy, and perhaps sinister, interests. These policies may be covered-up, sly, and tricky in their execution. The average reader may not detect them at all, and swallow the coloration whole.

Coloration may play up certain phases of a news event so as to give an entirely distorted view of what happened. Particular sentences in a speech may be quoted out of their context and a garbled report be offered to the public. Coloration is selecting unrepresentative aspects of a news event and giving the impression that they are representative. It may use this procedure for the deliberate purpose of deceiving the public and of producing a biased public opinion; and thus become a tool of propagandists.

In order to protect himself the reader must keep in mind constantly the special interests that the given newspaper represents. Even so, the coloration may be so indirect and the reader so easily hoodwinked that the baneful influence of coloration continues unabated.

Moreover, many readers accept the coloration gladly. Their wishful thinking thrives on the coloration of the news. In war-time, people want to hear about victories. They cannot stand

too many reports of defeats. They want the best made the most of and the worst played down.

Coloration is inseparably related to the suppression of the news. Wherever there is coloration, either intentional or unintentional, suppression has usually occurred. It may be an accidental or a careless suppression, due to the desire to publish other news. It may also be deliberate. The degree of coloration may be a measure of the amount of suppression.

Suppression of news is even more difficult to detect than coloration. That which one does not read may belatedly or never come to his attention. Omissions leave the reader helpless. He has a possible recourse, however, namely, by consulting another newspaper which represents different interests. But most persons do not have time or inclination to read two daily newspapers presenting the news from opposite angles.

Coloration is sometimes a clue to suppression of the news, hence a knowledge of a newspaper's special interests is of help. However, most people do not read critically. They do not weigh words and sentences. They are more or less relaxed when reading a newspaper and hence susceptible to the suggestions which characterize coloration.

Coloration raises the important question again of whether the newspaper's function is that of an organ or of an advocate. Theoretically the newspaper is an organ of the public's actions and opinions. It is supposed to tell what the people are doing and what they are thinking. Its function is that of being a spokesman, of telling one half of the people what the other half are thinking about, of reporting what is going on to its constituency, the general public.

Practically, most newspapers turn out to be advocates. This role is justifiable, of course, if it is announced, aboveboard, and honest. Partisanship is dangerous when it is sly, selfish, and dishonest. A real problem comes out of the fact that the advocate does justice to only one side of an issue, and from the related fact that the average person reads but one newspaper regularly. Thus, the newspaper may make rather than represent public opinion and do a one-sided piece of publicity work.

When a newspaper has published different sides of an issue in parallel columns the average reader is still confused. He finds it difficult to make up his mind because from unstated but

different premises each column states its side of the case so logically and effectively. The result is often further confusion, rather than clarification. Obviously, the need is for news columns and columnists and editorials which will begin with non-partisan premises, and present the news and its meanings not from one angle only but from the standpoint of the total welfare.

The treatment of news about other countries is often colored. A great deal of really important news, even in peacetime, is never printed, and hence no public opinion, even if greatly needed, develops. It is crowded out by less important local news. The judgment of the public is nearsighted. It wants news about matters close at hand but it rarely demands to know what really important developments are taking place on the other side of the globe.

Newspapers published in the United States on the Atlantic Coast or the Pacific Coast print more inches of news from abroad than does the press of the Middle West. An exception to this rule is illustrated by the fact that the newspapers of New England as a rule rate low in space given to such news. A newspaper chain has been known to have different policies for the East, the Middle West, and the West (in the United States) in the publishing of news about other nations,⁹ adjusting itself to the opinion areas of the country, but in so doing, presenting somewhat contradictory pictures of the news. It seems to interpret the news to suit the customer.

The choice of international news constitutes a still more formidable problem. A universal tendency exists in all countries to play up news favorable to the given country, and unfavorable to other countries. The repeated publication of items that show the superiority of the people of a "foreign" country to one's own people is unpopular. Thus, the influence on public opinion is unbalanced in every nation about all the other nations.

Intercultural and international newspapers have been suggested upon the following bases: (a) an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of races and peoples, (b) an objective view considering the national public opinion of every nation, (c) the writing up of news in keeping with a humanity-wide viewpoint,

⁹ Julian L. Woodward, *Foreign News in American Morning Newspaper* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930).

and (d) an attempt to formulate a correct public opinion on the part of the readers regarding human affairs.

Additional bases for an international press that have been proposed: One is (e) an understanding of the culture system of each nation, that is, an understanding of what each culture system means to the respective nation, and a comprehension of the ideologies and philosophies which function in and through the various culture systems. Another basis is (f) a philosophy which includes in itself the philosophies of all the major culture systems of the world.¹⁰ A negative requirement is (g) the cessation by the press in every country of the practice of hurling self-righteous moral judgments at other nations from the standpoint of its own ideologies, and the substitution of a viewpoint that includes a humanity-wide ideology.¹¹ Such proposals have been made as being essential to the development of a real international opinion.¹²

4. *Role of Editorials*

At one time the editorial was more influential than the news columns. People turned to the editorials to see what the comments of the editor were on the more important news items. They wanted the latter interpreted and they looked to the editor for his "views of the news," because they had confidence in him. They believed in the editor because of his independence of judgment, his breadth of view, his freedom from narrow or special interests.

People are interested in both facts and opinions. When they read facts and find them too complicated they turn to the editorials, the columnists, or elsewhere for the meanings of the facts. Herein lies the main function of editorials, namely, to give unbiased meanings of the facts so that sound public opinion may be engendered.

The reliable interpretation of facts calls for a broad and scientific and socially scientific training, in fact, for a staff of trained social science thinkers. Moreover, they must be free

¹⁰ F. S. C. Northrop, "The World Scene," in Iago Goldstor's *Social Medicine* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1949), p. 216.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹² A periodical such as *The Review of International Cooperation* (published monthly in London in English, French, and German) functions on the aforementioned bases.

from prejudices and they must not be advocates, protagonists, or propagandists. If they disclose biases the public promptly loses faith in them.

The editorial has lost its place in the sun. Although its sun has not set, it is greatly dimmed. And why? Partly, because the editorial writers are no longer owners of newspapers but are "hired men." Partly, because the newspaper has partisan policies even though truth is nonpartisan. Partly, the editorial "we" is believed by many to be used to cover up truth rather than to express it freely.

Editorials are sometimes read now not as a means of getting at the truth but because they "indicate biases with which news is written up." Over a period of time editorials in a given paper assume a particular pattern. Their viewpoints become so fixed and grooved that fairly accurate predictions can be made regarding their interpretations of many events. They now lack that independence and creativity which once gave them more influence in forming public opinion than was possessed by news itself.

The editorial has become impersonal. One does not know who writes the editorials. Since usually they are not signed, they lack the personal color of the writers. Behind unsigned editorials all kinds of sinister influences may find expression, and the impersonal may become unscientific and unreliable.

5. Rise of Columnists

The columnist has been developed as a means to offset the decline in the importance of the editorial. When the latter lost its color the columnist came to the rescue.

The columnist writes over his own name and with a certain degree of verve and independence. He expresses ideas not found in editorials. He speaks his mind without incriminating the owners of the newspapers who publish his "column."

The columnist varies from but does not violate the policies of his newspapers. He appears under the protection of a syndicate and, in the main, reflects the opinions of a given group of newspapers. His influence on public opinion comes from a seeming independence of thought. He is widely read partly because he puts his personality into his writing, and thus his column possesses a distinctiveness that makes it appealing and influential.

The largest newspapers maintain a dozen or more columnists—one or more for political issues, one or more for world affairs, one for sports, one for “society” life. Thus, every reader of a particular large newspaper has at least two or three favorite columnists, depending upon his personal interests. These departmentalized columnists have greatly magnified the influence of the old-time editorials. The “editorial” columns are now spread throughout the newspaper.

The columnist writes for a hundred or several hundred newspapers. Hence, he is the old-time editorial writer multiplied a hundredfold. He speaks to millions whereas his virile predecessor was limited to thousands.

The popularity of the columnist is due in part to the fact that he simplifies the news. He explains it. He interprets it in his own colorful way. He tells what is behind the news. He makes the news understandable by personalizing it.

Thus, his role is very important, for he holds in his pen all the possibilities of misinterpreting the news. He often lacks time in which to investigate thoroughly. He may be subject to all the biases and prejudices to which mortal man is subject and he may allow these falsifiers of truth to wield an influence over him. As an able journalistic writer he can cover up truth adroitly or misinterpret it innocently or slyly.

The columnist personalizes the news. He satisfies the dissatisfied reader of the impersonal editorial. By the personal garb which he puts upon the news, he gives it life and vivifies otherwise dry facts.¹³

6. *Function of Cartoons*

The word cartoon comes from the Latin “carta.” It refers to “a design on strong paper of the full size of a work to be executed in fresco, oil, tapestry, mosaic, or stained glass.” Some of these sketches by great masters have been called masterpieces. But with the decline of fresco, “cartoons” declined. In the original sense, a cartoon was a predrawing or a sketch—a more or less faithful sketch. But the sketch of life began to assume the role of “playing up” some of the weaknesses of its subject. At

¹³ For brief analyses of the work of columnists, such as Dorothy Thompson, Walter Lippmann, Drew Pearson, see David Bulman, *Molders of Opinion* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1945).

first it was intended to be humorous, but the temptation to introduce ridicule was strong.

A caricature is "a representation in which certain peculiarities of persons are exaggerated for the purpose of making the person or object ridiculous." One aim of ridicule is to build up one's own status by tearing down another's status. Caricature follows "man's ability to draw." Early Egyptians indulged in making grotesque drawings of people, but the Greeks refrained from ridiculing the human figure while holding up gods and heroes to caricature. The Romans caricatured philosophers as pigmies addressing foxes. In the Middle Ages the subjects of caricatures were Satan, Death, and monks. Louis XV of France was caricatured for his immoralities, and Louis Philippe, for his pear-shaped head.

In England, both the Puritans and Cavaliers resorted to caricatures. In the eighteenth century William Hogarth became the father of modern English caricature. In the American Colonies, Paul Revere and Benjamin Franklin are reported to have been the first to apply caricature to the political cartoon. The modern cartoon assumed its real role as a public opinion agency about seventy-five years ago.

The cartoon was "institutionalized" in *Punch* in London in 1841 and in the *Fliegende Blätter* in Munich in 1884. *Puck* was established in the United States in 1876; *Judge*, in 1877; *Cartoons*, in 1912.

The cartoon, particularly as caricature, played a public opinion role in the Civil War and early post-Civil War days. Thomas Nast was a pioneer cartoonist of great fame. Of him as a cartoonist it has been said that he was "as brave as Tweed was crooked." He has been credited with creating the Democratic donkey, the Republican elephant, and the Tammany tiger. The political cartoon has been the most common type.

When the half-tone process was invented and actual photographs were printed in the newspapers, the cartoon lost its primary place. It gave way to the camera. It could not compete for public attention with myriads of vibrant pictures of daily life freely printed every morning and evening.

The cartoons did not die out, but took second place. The cartoonist can put in the picture what the camera cannot produce. It can put situations into juxtaposition although separated

widely in space. It can bring past and present together to show contrasts or ridiculous trends. For example, a famous cartoon of prohibition days showed a distillery with its products coming out—an army of staggering men, beaten women, wan-faced children.

In the modern day caricature still lives in cartoons; it is declared to be "the modern court jester." "He freely lances about and is not held to be strictly accountable for what he says."¹⁴ He uses indirect suggestion. He infers and insinuates more effectively and to a greater extent than does the editorial writer. Examine the cartoon showing a politician crawling through a window into a building called "public office." Money bags labeled "campaign expenses" have enabled him to climb in the window. Over at one side of the cartoon is a man asleep. He is the "voting public," the honest public which neglects to vote. When public opinion is unaroused, the crooked politician may climb into the public saddle.

Caricature also lives in the candid camera. At first thought one would say that the camera cannot lie, and that what the developed negative shows must be the truth. But candid camera shots can distort. The angle at which a picture is taken makes all the difference in the world. By manipulation of angles the candid camera can give a worthy candidate for office the appearance of a knave.

The comic cartoon plays up human foibles. It ranges "from ridicule to ludicrousness." It aims its shafts at defects in the behavior of people. It attacks human weaknesses but under a friendly canopy. A striking cartoon shows a woman in an ill-lighted tenement. She is forlorn and the children on the floor are in rags. A wealthy woman, lavishly dressed, has stepped in and is saying, "Relax; all you need to do is relax, and you'll be happy."

The cartoon "depicts universal culture patterns, and symbolizes widely common predicaments." It molds fugitive opinions into common pictures. It summarizes what people have been thinking about but have never put together. It reveals culture trends and suggests "next steps."

The cartoon is a past master in depicting human attitudes

¹⁴ George D. Nickel, graduate student, University of Southern California, unpublished paper.

and opinions. For example: In the cartoon of a man trying to unlock the door into the U. S. Senate, the candidate is using a key made of money, but it does not unlock the door. He is scratching the back of his head and asking himself: "Can this be the wrong key?"

The cartoon defines social weaknesses. After the Naval Arms Conference some years ago at Geneva, a cartoon appeared showing Uncle Sam, John Bull, a Japanese, each sitting on his own national flag pole, and with each seeming to defy the others to come down.

7. *Decline of Newspaper Influence*

A decline in the opinion-making influence of the newspaper has been noted for some time.¹⁵ Popular opinion is not affected today as it was in an earlier generation. It does not trust the press as much as it did formerly. Many factors explain this decline, as indicated in the findings of Francis E. Leupp,¹⁶ which are summarized here:

- a. Transfer of properties and policies from personal to impersonal control.
- b. Competition among newspapers and pronounced political partisanship.
- c. Development of the press as a several-million dollar big business.
- d. A shift from "ideals" to "commercial aims."
- e. The development of news-getting at the expense of careful news-interpreting, and an increased appeal to the emotions of readers.
- f. A tendency to coloration and the remolding of the news narratives to fit office policies.
- g. The publication of an increased amount of scandal.
- h. The tendency to keep the public stirred up all the time by big headlines.

A source of chagrin to the newspaper owner is the way in which the public ignores the recommendations of the press on

¹⁵ See Lucy M. Salmon, *The Newspaper and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923).

¹⁶ Francis E. Leupp, "The Waning Power of the Press," *Atlantic Monthly*, 105:146.

political issues and candidates. For instance in 1919 nearly all the newspapers in the city of New York opposed Gaynor for mayor and yet he was elected. Then later, when the New York press supported Mitchell for mayor he was defeated. Pingree was elected governor of Michigan three times with 90 per cent of the big newspapers opposed to him. In 1940 over two-thirds of the newspapers throughout the United States supported Willkie, and yet he was defeated; in 1944 and again in 1948 the percentage of newspaper support for Dewey was very high, but he was defeated both times. In 1944, Dewey had the support of the dailies with 68.5 per cent of the circulation and Roosevelt had the support of only 17.7 per cent of the circulation, yet the latter won. In 1948, Dewey was supported by the newspapers having 78.5 per cent of the circulation and Truman by the press having only 10.03 per cent of the circulation; yet Truman received a plurality of 2,000,000 votes over Dewey.

The explanation of this phenomenon most frequently offered is that the press represents the upper middle and wealthy classes more accurately than it does the lower economic levels of society. The subtle influence of party politics is also an explanatory factor. Then there is skepticism on the part of many independent voters regarding the reliability of newspapers.

The tabloid newspaper has not been, on the whole, an improvement. By the use of pictures, of a smaller-sized newspaper, of greater appeals to the emotions, it has built up large circulations, but not the prestige of the newspaper.

The newspaper without much advertising has been free from some of the aforementioned weaknesses. However, the problems of financing such a newspaper sooner or later rise to hinder the efficiency of such a publication, and to limit its circulation. It cannot support itself on subscriptions, and hence must seek other sources of revenue.

The municipal newspaper has been tried but has not succeeded to any great extent in the United States. It is subject to party politics and generally lacks color and news appeal. It does not receive very great support from the general public.

Among the many other suggestions that have been made for the improvement of the press as an organ of public opinion is that its publication be financed by an independent trust fund, supervised and administered impartially. Political, economic,

and religious neutrality would be needed, but might not always be easy to maintain.

It has also been proposed that all major news stories be signed, that all editorials be signed, and that all editors be licensed in ways similar to teachers. Walter Lippmann has suggested that the sources of news reports be stated, and that the affiliations of all the major staff members be given.¹⁷

Another suggestion is that newspapers should be co-operatively owned, and that membership be open. If most of the people in a given region were part-owners the newspaper would become a democratic organ of the people. It would reflect the opinions of no one class or set of special interests. If it could be a truly representative social institution, its control might be placed in the hands of the consumers. Even under such a co-operative ownership there would always be need for continuous education of the public for the purpose of raising its standards of news values.

The day of the newspaper is not over. Walter Lippmann has viewed the newspaper as "the Bible of Democracy." He declared that it is the book out of which a people determines its behavior. "It is the only serious book most people read."¹⁸

8. *Journals of Opinion and Books*

Weekly journals have had considerable vogue in recent decades in the United States. They have developed because of demand from the reading public for something more reliable than the newspaper. The news dished out daily behind blinding headlines is confusing; people want to know what is behind the news, and the weekly journals of opinion have arisen to meet the needs of a limited but important section of the public.

Some of these journals function in the field of political opinion, such as the *Nation* and *New Republic*. Others specialize on religious matters, as illustrated by *The Christian Century* (Protestant) and *Commonweal* (Catholic). Still others function, for example, as exponents of the development and welfare of women, as in the case of *The Woman's Press*. In each of these

¹⁷ Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 72 ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

publications a definitely developed editorial policy is made clear to the readers. Each develops a public of its own which it continually seeks to enlarge. Each endeavors to expand its public and to develop an ever-stronger and more efficient public opinion. Each gives facts to support its editorial opinions.

Another development is that of the pocket-size news digests which are printed monthly and aim to give facts, even technical facts, in a way that people can understand and use as a basis for developing their own opinions. Many of the "digests" have large clienteles of avid readers, and the indirect effect on public opinion is extensive. Some slant the facts in given directions of public action.

But the materials which are digested and printed in the digests are often more or less popular and simple in character, and they may be impartially selected and widely read. On the other hand, the people who read scientific journals in which the results of far-reaching research are published are few and select. The products of research are too technical for ninety-five per cent or more of the people. Hence the "digests" have considerable influence on public opinion.

The need is for a social science digest that will really put the basic facts of research in all fields in such a readable form that millions will read and be influenced. In this way, and for the first time in human history, public opinion could be based on solid foundations. Until such a time comes, or until some equally effective technique is developed, public opinion will continue to be largely the product of the restless surging of personal feelings and uncertain thinking, of ill-founded myth and rumor, of piecemeal facts and unreliable data, and of propaganda and counter-propaganda.

Periodicals with wide circulation apparently exert extensive influence on public opinion, though the articles which they publish are openly or subtly partisan in nature. The articles which frankly state their aims give the readers fair warning, but those which appear as wolves in sheep's clothing temporarily fool thousands of readers.

The books that relate to opinion-formation are of three types. In the first are those which attempt to analyze public opinion, its nature, and its influence. These contain bibliographies of

merit. Very little has been done, however, on the analysis of opinion-making and of who and what makes public opinion.¹⁹

In the second type are books which are directly designed to influence public opinion. Many of the former directly state their aim, namely, to build up arguments in behalf of a given cause or to attack some publicly proposed change in human affairs. Wendell Willkie's *One World*²⁰ was doubtless influential, for instance, in stimulating many readers to think for the first time of the peoples in different countries as belonging to one world, their world. In *Peace or Pestilence*,²¹ by Dr. Rosebury, chief of the airborne infection project at the United States Biological Warfare Headquarters (Camp Detrick) during World War II, a definite attempt is made first to arouse public opinion regarding the dangers of biological warfare, and second to develop a public opinion favorable to the international control of man-made pestilences that would wipe out cities while leaving all their buildings unharmed and silent sepulchers.

In the third type are books that use the indirect pattern of influencing people. This is the method of works of fiction which specialize on indirect suggestion in arousing sentiment against a social institution. An historical example in the United States is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe. It aroused large numbers of people in the northern states to resolve to do something about the institution of slavery. A current example is Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, in which the mis-

¹⁹ A few of the best known books of this type may be listed as follows:

William Albig, *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939).

H. L. Childs, *An Introduction to Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1940).

L. W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1948).

W. B. Graves, *Readings in Public Opinion* (New York: D. Appleton-Century and Company, 1928).

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922).

M. B. Ogle, Jr., *Public Opinion and Political Dynamics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950).

C. W. Smith, Jr., *Public Opinion in a Democracy* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1942).

²⁰ Wendell Willkie, *One World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943).

²¹ Dr. Theodor Rosebury, *Peace or Pestilence* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1949).

treatment of the Bantu in the Union of South Africa is depicted.²²

The newspapers, periodicals, books, all play important roles in opinion-making. They achieve this result by presenting facts and propaganda forcibly, by making appeals to the human emotions, by spreading personal opinions favorable or unfavorable regarding a public issue.

²² Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).

CHAPTER V

Seeing Motion Pictures

MOTION PICTURES as factors in opinion-making is a theme little explored. At first thought the connection seems indefinite, but further analysis discloses some direct and many indirect relationships. Movies exercise powerful human appeals with long-term results. Newsreels affect opinion-making directly. Motion pictures that are made in one country and shown in another affect international opinion. In fact, the influence on the public is so great that various forms of public control of motion pictures have developed.

Motion pictures have both vied with and supplemented the newspaper in its effects on public opinion. They supplant the printed page with pictures following one another as fast as the eye can follow them. They appeal powerfully to the feeling side of life. They affect human attitudes and opinions not only through the eye, but through combined eye and ear. They synchronize their impact with mechanical precision.

This new development began about 1900 and became organized by 1910. The influence of motion pictures on public opinion for both good and bad was early recognized. Motion pictures early received high praise and also aroused the protests of censors.

For decades now motion pictures have been playing to millions of people daily in the United States, not to mention the large attendance in cities the world around. For decades the ablest skills of scenario writers, producers, directors, actors, advertisers have been combined to appeal to the individuals of every nationality, of every occupational interest, of every intellectual level.

The talking picture quickly supplanted the silent film. The animated cartoon gave wide room for the play of fancy. Techni-

color produced startlingly attractive pictures. Television, a long while in coming, is the next step whereby color and sound are beginning to play a myriad of stimuli on millions of people, and to exercise control over personal feelings and thought, and hence over public opinion.

1. Appeals

Motion pictures help to create the origins of public opinion. All the subtleties of indirect suggestion and of psychological conditioning are used. While the newsreel makes current events vivid, informs multitudes concerning latest developments in the human drama the world around, and furnishes a background of information, the feature pictures repeatedly stir the emotions of people through and through. Thus, by information and by emotional appeal motion pictures wield mighty influence over the feelings and minds of men and women, of adults and children.

The chief origins of public opinion in motion pictures lie deep in the feelings, in the unconscious, in the stirring upheavals in sentiment, and in "build ups" in behalf of status quo or of social change. They are found in the desires of people to be entertained.

Perhaps the motion picture stars influence human behavior more than do the pictures. Every act of these stars involving speech, coiffure, dress, amusements, family relationships, is watched and copied by half a world of adults and a whole world of youth. The glamor of the stars is irresistible to millions of people. The behavior of stars molds the opinions of hundreds of thousands regarding many phases of behavior. Their behavior on and off the screen sets the pace for their countless worshippers around the globe.

The almost universal appeal of the motion picture is evidenced by the thousands of motion picture theaters that are filled weekly, if not daily, or more than once daily. The never-ending streams of men, women, and children that flock to see motion pictures indicate that powerful appeals are being made, and hence, that widespread and continual influences are being exerted on personal opinions and on public opinion.

Motion pictures appeal to a wide variety of human interests, to people in all walks of life, to individuals of all ages. They

deal with almost all phases of life, and their influence affects public opinion from countless angles.

They make their appeals through the eye. They reach artistic heights. They hold attention by motion. Something is doing every minute and change is forever occurring. They keep their onlookers on visual tiptoe regarding what is going to happen next.

They also appeal via the ear. They approximate reality when sound effects are reproduced in perfect synchronization with moving images. They send their stimuli into the human organism through two pairs of open channels—eyes and ears—and responses are imperative.

Their appeals to the human feelings are overwhelming. They hold people in suspense by drama and melodrama. They play upon the delicate sentiments of private life and they beat upon the drums of patriotism and group loyalty.

They arouse vigorous defense reactions regarding every tradition and custom that people hold dear. They arouse fears regarding the possible loss of status quo. They cause prejudices to leap into action in self-protection. They challenge inertia and they fly the flags of security over vested interests.

On the other hand, some motion pictures challenge the unjust and cruel practices of mankind. These arouse liberal feelings and suggest revolutionary action. They heap ridicule on outworn customs and beliefs. Some bomb selfishness and organized greed.

Motion pictures are past-masters in their use of indirect suggestions.¹ People are led in one direction or another without being aware of what is going on in the unconscious aspects of their nature. So subtle are the suggestions that many people become greatly aroused by a motion picture without having the slightest idea as to how it all happened. They are totally unaware of having been peppered, as it were, with many tiny and unrecognized stimuli.

Doubtless many of the motion picture appeals are superficial but the sum total of superficial appeals is bound to have its influence on personal opinions. Moreover, most of these effects are never recognized as such. Human nature has set up

¹ Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 198.

few defenses against inroads of repetitive stimuli. As a result of the speed with which one scene follows another the observer has no time to think about the deeper meaning of any of them, and deep appeals become superficial appeals.

Motion pictures have intellectual appeals, which usually are less effective than are those which are dominated by feelings. The public in general does not go to movies to be educated. It does not want to do hard or difficult thinking. It goes to the movies to be entertained.

The chief adventures of motion pictures into public-opinion realms are made by the historical and biographical types. In these fields a great deal of research is done, but considerable license is exercised in presenting history or biography. The picture is never complete. Certain events in the life of a group or of a person are selected for their dramatic appeal. Other, and sometimes, vital events are deliberately omitted. Yet the results are often far-reaching in their effects on popular opinion.

Even a melodramatic motion picture may suddenly jerk its observers up short with a pointed remark, a pithy saying, a clever paradox in words. Casual and sometimes simple remarks may also sink deep and set some people thinking.

Too commonly box-office receipts influence the appeals that motion pictures are geared to make. Many people succumb to the cheap, tawdry, and lustful. Hence, box-office receipts go up as the moral quality of pictures goes down. Likewise, these receipts which denote lucrative returns to the promoter, vanish when pictures become really intellectual. At this point the motion picture suffers from the same temptation that a newspaper faces when headlines and crime news cause sales to jump skyward. The test of box-office receipts affects the influence of motion pictures on public opinion adversely to human welfare. As quality goes down and feeling appeals go up, box-office receipts go up, but wholesome influence on the public goes down.

Some of these difficulties are obviated by municipal or state owned motion pictures, but these are subject to other weaknesses, such as authoritarian propaganda and censorship. The co-operative type of privately owned and operated motion picture production is most likely to be free on one hand from box

office domination and on the other hand from authoritarian control.

2. *Effects*

Many studies have been made of the effects of motion pictures upon the public, both upon children and upon adults. The Payne Fund Studies, which were conducted under the direction of W. W. Charters and published in several volumes, have dealt in a factual way with such problems as getting ideas from the movies, the responses of children, the social conduct and attitudes of movie fans, motion pictures and standards of morality, movies and conduct. The title of the book, *Our Movie-Made Children*,² is most significant.

In a study of "getting ideas from the movies," it is concluded that the general information of children and adults is increased to a considerable extent by correctly shown information through motion pictures.³ Also, incorrect information which is presented indirectly by the pictures is often accepted as valid. Thus, motion pictures contribute correct and incorrect backgrounds for the formulation of personal opinions and of public opinion.

The retention value of many incidents seen on the screen is relatively high. This retention value is highest when the incident deals with "sports, general action, crime, and fighting"; when it has a high emotional appeal; and when it occurs in a familiar type of surroundings, such as home, school, or tenement.⁴ Retention value relates directly to the formation of opinion. If the retention findings regarding children are characteristic of adults in a modified way, motion pictures play a role of considerable importance in the making and unmaking of public opinion on many subjects.

A part of the far-reaching effects of motion pictures is found in the simple art forms which are used. Motion pictures are a form of popular art.⁵ They draw the observer "into the drama so that he loses himself," and "becomes malleable to the touch

² Henry J. Forman, *Our Movie-Made Children* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933).

³ Perry W. Holaday, *Getting Ideas from the Movies* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵ Blumer, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

of what is shown.”⁶ Criticism is dulled, feelings are excited, and “the individual develops a readiness for certain forms of action” and thinking which vary from his ordinary behavior.

In a series of studies made during World War II on the influence of motion picture films, it was found that the best criterion of the successful influence of a film is not whether the audience approves of a film, but whether the “audience learns from a film.”⁷ Most of the radio personnel who were interviewed in these studies believed that the documentary film was far more influential than the commentator program. Audience participation in a film presentation increases the learning process on the part of the audience. Retention from seeing a film was “about 50 per cent as great after nine weeks as after five days.”⁸

“Sleeper effects” is an interesting aspect of film influence. These are effects that do not show immediately but after a period of time. They are “observed among individuals already predisposed to accept an opinion but who have not yet accepted it.”⁹

In a film involving indoctrination of soldiers it was found best to present arguments on both sides when some individuals are known to be opposed, that all the main arguments on the opposing side may best be presented at the outset, that refutation of these may be attempted only when “compelling and strictly factual materials” are available, and that an unrefuted opposing argument may well be followed by “an uncontroversial positive argument.”¹⁰ These findings have a bearing not only on uses of films but on many other kinds of materials too.

The most significant theories of the influence of the movies on the public have been called the specific influence theory, the general influence theory, and the interaction theory. Suggested by Shuttleworth and May, they will now be considered.¹¹

According to the specific influence theory, certain recurrent

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Carl V. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, Fred D. Sheffield, *Comments on Mass Communication* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 203 ff.

¹¹ Frank K. Shuttleworth and Mark A. May, *The Social Conduct and Attitudes of Movie Fans* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933) pp. 84-93.

patterns of behavior that are observed in several motion pictures have a cumulative effect on the behavior and the thinking of the observer, especially on a young person. Examples are found in the films that repeatedly show free love scenes, a long kissing encounter, a triangle love tangle between a husband, wife, and third party, a drinking spree in which all seem wildly to enjoy themselves.

The general influence theory supports the belief that it is the total effect of a motion picture that counts. The sum total of influences of all pictures of a given type seen by a person in a year is considerable. It is the effect of the atmosphere which is created among the observers of a motion picture which is important. Does a picture as a whole build up or break down the observer's code of behavior? Does it raise or lower his opinion of marriage? Does it influence him in the direction of or away from the use of alcoholic liquors? Does it make him more or less conservative in matters of economics or politics or religion?

The interaction theory holds that as a result of the interaction of a motion picture and the observer the latter is more and more fixed in his special interests. He selects certain pictures because they deal with his interests in ways that he wants to have them treated. This theory fits in well with the contention already mentioned that people read the newspaper which fosters their own political or economic ideas.

The interaction theory leads to the conclusion that motion pictures help to fixate certain beliefs and behavior patterns that a person already possesses. By their feeling appeals and their uses of indirect suggestion, motion pictures "further establish the behavior patterns and types of attitudes which already exist among those who attend most frequently."¹²

Perhaps the effects of motion pictures could be summarized in a contradictory way: They both undermine and increase conservatism. They "liberalize" in the realm of morals, of the husband and wife pattern, in the use of liquor and of cigarettes, in styles of dress and of amusements. On the other hand they generally promote conservative patterns regarding religion, private property (in capitalist countries), nationalism, race consciousness.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Motion pictures are especially effective in establishing stereotypes regarding many phases of daily life. While some of these stereotypes are valid, others are ill-founded. An illustration of the socially dangerous type of stereotype arises whenever a foreigner is used as a villain. Take the case of the villain in a motion picture filmed a few years ago, who carried a long knife and stealthily entered the tent of a sleeping man. Presently he quickly slid out of the tent and disappeared in the darkness. Later the dead body of a white man was carried out. The man with the knife was Chinese, and to many motion picture attendants he became a stereotype of the Chinese people. Children and even adults reported that after seeing this picture, they shuddered whenever they saw or came near a Chinese, feeling that he was sly and evil-minded. Since they had no stereotype of a high-class Chinese, the villain type stood for all Chinese. Even a high-class stereotype would doubtless give way in the minds of many persons to the villain, for the latter stereotype, being more dramatic, tends to dominate human impressions. It is this kind of reaction which has led to protests against using foreigners as villains in any motion picture.

Sometimes a stereotype arouses no fear or hatred, but heaps ridicule on a whole occupational type. A classic illustration was furnished some years ago by the showing of a preacher as an antiquated and forlorn person, having a long face, unkempt hair, and wearing an unclean frock coat. The audience laughed boisterously when such a picture was shown. The picture became an unfavorable stereotype for many people and did a gross injustice to up-to-date ministers. It was also claimed that such a stereotype made fun of religion itself.

To a widely shown film in 1942, Negro leaders raised serious objections because of the stereotype of the Negro race that was depicted. They pointed out that it set before the American and its other audiences a stereotype of the Negro as an "illiterate clown," as one who meets his problems by "shoutin' his way to glory," as a child, naïve and superstitious, "awed by what de Lawd has done." Although Negro art is given a prominent place in the same film, it does not offset the stereotype of the Negro as being "illiterate, groveling, superstitious." To the extent that stereotypes, both constructive ones as well as destructive, play upon the unconscious aspects of psychical processes,

particularly the emotional, are they likely to have lasting effects in opinion-making.

The public is more seriously impressed by negative and unfavorable stereotypes than by the favorable and constructive ones, not only because of greater dramatic nature of the former but also for the same reason that people indulge in gossip, namely, to raise one's own status. All arouse lasting if not indelible images in the human mind, and affect the formation of opinions when related public issues are involved.

3. *Newsreels*

While the newsreel is more directly related to the formation of public opinion than the feature picture its influence is exerted differently. It tells a graphic story of current events in a vivid, moving way. As such it keeps people up-to-date concerning the happenings of today and yesterday, and affords them new grounds for tomorrow's opinions.

Newsreels supplement the newspaper. Most of the events depicted in newsreels deal with happenings currently reported in newspapers or over the radio. But the printed account may have been minimized by the reader, whereas the newsreel brings to the observers' imagination a striking portrayal of happenings.

The newsreel may speak as a propagandist. The materials that are shown may have been selected for a purpose, to arouse patriotism, to build morale, to deflate undue optimism, to urge a reform, or to defeat a reform.

A newsreel accompanied by realistic sound, such as a band playing, or a crowd cheering wholeheartedly, arouses, at least temporarily, a great deal of favorable or unfavorable reaction with reference to some person or cause. The newsreel exerts an influence because of its realism. It shows the real thing in process of actually taking place. It is accepted at its face value. Hence, it furnishes an immediate fund of knowledge for the expression of both personal and public opinion.

The newsreel appeals because it is short and snappy. In a few moments of time it takes its observers to many of the main hot spots of unique human activities. It gives a short, effective view of what is going on around the world. It brings the essence of tense strife and of joyous endeavor from opposite points on the

globe within the range of the human eye—all within a few minutes.

The influence of the newsreel on public opinion has never been adequately measured. This influence cannot be ignored, for the newsreel is one of the most effective ways of telling the story of current events. It is ultrarealistic, moving, stirring. Attention is rapt and minds are busy. Millions are daily put in visual touch with the doings of mankind. By selecting a few incidents out of many and vivifying these, public opinion is not only stimulated but given definite direction.

4. Animated Cartoons

In motion pictures the cartoonist can provide a scintillating escape for the tired, the sick, and the frustrated. He can create a fantasia that may lead people into acquiring normal attitudes and opinions again.

The animated cartoon can offer criticism on certain phases of social life, as in the case of Dopey in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." It can create a public opinion favorable to animal life of the forest, as is implicit in Bambi. It can create and marshal its characters in support of any cause and in promoting opinion favorable to any social movement. By indirection and subtle suggestion it can wield powerful influence regarding any aspect of human life.

The effectiveness of the animated cartoon as a means for creating public opinion lies in its ability to catch people off their guard. A fantasy creates a fantastic atmosphere. People "let down," do not remain normally critical, and consequently, are especially subject to skillfully planned animation.

The cartoon element in the animated cartoon is often overlooked. The foibles of life can be criticized easier by the animated cartoon than by almost any other device. The constructive values likewise can be emphasized to good advantage more easily. Not being viewed with normal tension the animated cartoon can put over a criticism without offending, and can advance a social value without being didactic.

The possible influences of animated pictures on public opinion have scarcely been dreamed. The uses have been limited chiefly to fantastic escapes. The constructive developments are

limitless, and the influences, both positive and negative, on public opinion have hardly been anticipated.

5. *International Roles*

Since a large percentage of motion pictures are made in the United States the international role of motion pictures pertains largely to the influence of pictures made in the United States upon public opinion in other countries. In nearly all countries American-made pictures are being widely shown.

There are adverse reactions to American-made pictures shown in other countries when they contain shots pertaining to the given country. Inaccuracies or misconceptions are often charged up against not only the pictures, but against the United States. The inaccuracies generally relate to culture patterns in other countries. Some of these are plain blunders due to failure to understand cultural history. When liberties are taken with facts, current or historical, in a picture showing life in another country, the citizen of that nation does not always understand, and hence is likely to be offended. Thus a widespread unfavorable public opinion may develop against the United States, because it allows such distortions to be presented as the truth.

Perhaps a still more serious problem is the incorrect public opinion that is developed concerning the people of the United States. This unfavorable opinion is based on the numerous fist-fights in the pictures, the knock-down episodes, the excessive drinking of liquor and the resultant brawls, "the half-dressed, half-naked women" who make sex appeals to men, the common use of firearms, triangle cases involving divorce, and so on. Of course, many of the fine things about American life are shown in pictures, but the abnormal and the bad make the greater impression and lay the groundwork for all kinds of false opinions.

The opportunities for building good will between the United States and other countries, such as Latin-American countries, are offset by offenses taken at something in Hollywood pictures. Good will that is built up slowly and laboriously can be and is dashed to the ground suddenly by a single offensive scene in a picture. Only a few motion pictures disclose an understanding of the social psychology of national and racial relations.

It is claimed that some motion pictures, when shown in other

countries, give the impression that the people of the United States are national egotists. Thus pictures which are understood at home may rouse antagonisms abroad. Some of these pictures give the impression that the United States is a nation given over largely to commercial undertakings. Some create the opinion that this country is grandiose and superficial. Many pictures lower the prestige of the white race in the opinions of millions of other races.¹³

The opportunities open to motion picture producers in skillfully and painstakingly building up good will between the United States and other countries are limitless. They hold many of the keys to building a widespread international good will. They can unlock countless doors to the building of a constructive international opinion.

In order to create a better world opinion regarding each nation, there is needed a series of truly international and global pictures—pictures that reveal the deeply human nature of people of all races and nations. Pictures could go far in building a constructive global public opinion.

6. Control of Motion Pictures

The control of motion pictures may be organized but unofficial or it may be organized and official. The members of a welfare group or of churches get together and censor pictures.

Sometimes this censorship may be narrow and intolerant. It may have a special notion regarding what is good and what is harmful for public welfare. It sometimes fails to yield to persons equally honest and concerned for the public morals, who would exercise different standards of control.

Today there is a broad-minded control that is expressed weekly or monthly in certain magazines or by special committees of welfare agencies. A composite estimate is presented to the picture-going public regarding the nature of currently shown movies. As far as these reports are accepted, they extend the influence of certain pictures in specific directions, and lessen the influence of other pictures.

This source of evaluation is usually effective for the clientele of its sponsors. Many people watch for descriptions and esti-

¹³ See Charles Merz, "When Movies Go Abroad," *Harper's Magazine*, 152:159-165.

mates of pictures from particular sources and regularly follow them.

Control may be official, for municipalities and sometimes states have established boards of censors with limited powers. Not whole pictures but portions of a picture may be ordered deleted because they are judged to be harmful to public morals or welfare.

Public opinion has many standards and there is no consensus regarding what is best for the public welfare. Consequently censors who represent the public by official appointment are generally in a dilemma. They have difficulty in satisfying all the groups of interested people, because of the differences in the interests.

By ordering the deletion of objectionable scenes the censor avoids a problem faced by the critics of motion pictures who condemn but do not stop the showing of objectionable pictures. Condemnation by itself arouses the curiosity of many motion picture goers, and leads to actual increase in attendance; deletion can have no such effect.

Perhaps it would be wiser for the public to set up positive standards that must be achieved by a producer before his picture is released. However, a fundamental problem remains, namely, of determining a set of standards which public opinion would support with a fair degree of approval.

Control has been set up by the motion picture industry itself. This procedure was originated in the Twenties when the industry in the United States secured a member of the President's Cabinet to head an office which would study public opinion and seek to placate it and to forestall public opposition. Two methods have been used. One is to prevent producers from stepping over what are judged to be the bounds of public propriety. Many pictures reach the borderlines of public disapproval, but by manipulation of scenes skate along on the edge, as it were, of public approval. The other method is to try to educate the public to wider tolerance. Both methods have their limitations, for public opinion is a fickle taskmaster, and instead of one there are a hundred and one standards of public opinion which must be taken into consideration and satisfied.

Several years ago the National Board of Review was set up by the motion-picture industry. Its name was a misnomer and

misleading, for the phrase, "passed by the National Board," gave the impression that action had been taken by an official body of the nation. The National Board was composed of persons selected and appointed by the industry itself. However, it included many public-minded citizens, and represented a variety of interests. Moreover, it set itself the task "of trying to represent public opinion." The Board at one time divided the country into sections and endeavored to take different regional opinions into consideration in its work.

The motion picture industry has also endeavored to sample public opinion by carefully considering the reactions of audiences to various pictures and to different parts of the same picture. But the fallacies in this procedure are serious. It does not take into consideration all the people who do not attend movies or who come only a few times a year. Another fallacy is based on the fact that the more emotional members of an audience loudly express their reactions, while the more intellectual or reserved members do not usually show their approval or disapproval. Hence, the overt reactions of an audience to a picture are far from being a true cross-section of the total, or even the representative opinion of a given theater audience.

William Albig has summed up the influence of motion pictures on public opinion in this way: "American films have been evangelical for a way of life that emphasizes, among other things, individual freedom, lack of discipline, youthful lack of restraint, and a thoroughgoing and avid consumption of economic goods."¹⁴ This direct influence is considered more far-reaching and indirectly influential than all the direct propaganda incorporated in motion pictures. Motion pictures play upon the emotions and set up currents of human feeling that may influence widely the direction of public opinion.

¹⁴ William Albig, *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), p. 380.

CHAPTER VI

Listening to the Radio

WITHIN THE PAST score of years the radio has taken a place, with its older sisters, the motion picture and the newspaper, as an important factor in the formation of public opinion. Through news broadcasts and high-paid commentators the radio has played directly upon making and changing public opinion. By short waves radio deploys its opinion-making power across national boundaries. During wartime, radio plays a major part in public morale-building. The control of radio programs is a problem of public concern. Television, with its entry into the homes of people, bringing a combined sight and sound program of events as they are occurring at the moment, calls for careful consideration as an opinion-maker.

1. News Broadcasts

The radio, like the newspaper, comes into the homes of the people. With over 50,000,000 receiving sets in more than 30,000,000 homes in the United States alone, and with each set being in operation several hours a day on the average, the number of mental contacts is incalculable. While a great deal of the broadcasting does not affect public opinion directly, yet there is an inestimable amount of indirect influence that broadcasting of various sorts exerts during all the waking hours of people around the world.

While the newspaper appeals through the eye, the radio commands attention through the ear. Thus they are often complementary rather than competitive in their relation to public opinion. Many people who listen to news items also like to read about the same events. Thus the appeal of one avenue of approach to public opinion gives support to the other.

The radio's limitation to the human voice emphasizes the

importance of the tone and persuasive quality of the spoken word. High-pitched, shrill voices are ruled out, while deep, rich, mellow voices are at a premium. The radio voice that commands most attention, other things being equal, is one to which numbers of people enjoy listening because of its resonance, clearness of enunciation, pleasing notes, melodious sounds. In short, it has been suggested that over the radio "voice equals leadership."

Interestingly enough the voice that commands a crowd or even some audiences by shouting has no radio appeal. Excitement over the radio is allowed only in the tense moments of reporting a football game or in enacting the tragic scenes of a play. Otherwise, the voice of strength, of poise, and of thoughtful demeanor is at a premium.

However, the voice is not everything. While President Franklin D. Roosevelt's voice ranked high as a radio medium, yet political opponents would not listen except in time of crisis. Under ordinary circumstances they were not persuaded by it. Social nearness between listener and speaker is more significant than voice.

Voice and social nearness are but two points which signify radio influence. Radio listeners are especially sensitive to details of speech and pronunciation. They react adversely on the slightest provocation, not only against what is said but how it is said. Hence the radio speaker easily cancels his own influence. He must pronounce all the letters in a word that correct speech calls for, and he must not mispronounce a single word.

Moreover, the radio speaker must not whimper or whine. He cannot go far in appealing for sympathy. Silliness is not tolerated, except in entertainment programs. Blustering is quickly recognized and "dialed out." "Radio speaking," says H. V. Kaltenborn, "is an almost indecent exposure of personality."¹ The presentation must be clear and forthright or the influence on public opinion is negative.

The radio reaches those who do not have time to read. Soldiers report that they do not read the press except irregularly but that they listen regularly over the radio each day. Many housewives have substituted listening for reading, and in conse-

¹ H. V. Kaltenborn, "On Being on the Air," *Independent*, 114:583.

quence their reading has been greatly reduced. All who have poor eyesight bless the radio daily.

The radio reaches the illiterate and as such has been described as an important instrument of mass education. It reaches those who cannot or do not read and arouses public opinion in out-of-the-way nooks of the world. To a degree radio makes reading unnecessary.

The appeal of the radio is partly due to its instantaneous nature. It waits on no printing presses, and it tarries for no scenario to be written and transferred to film. It makes people alert on the spot where they are, in their homes, in their automobiles, in trains, in the air, on the high seas. In consequence the effects on public opinion, of course, are multifarious. The radio extends and multiplies the reaches of both education and propaganda.

A limited study that has been made on the relative influence of direct public speaking, of speaking over the radio, and of reading in the newspaper produced interesting results. The changes obtained by direct speaking were represented by 9.5 per cent; by the radio, 7.9 per cent; and by reading, 6.3 per cent.² Television combines speaking over the radio, the motion picture in natural colors, and the reporting of news at the time that it occurs and from the spot where it occurs.

There are two kinds of newscasts. One gives the actual news. It is a simple presentation of what has happened. It is a broadcasting of news flashed from all over the world. As such it has no more and no less significance than news passed on by conversation or telegraphic reports in the newspapers.

The other type of news broadcast is an interpretation of the news. The role is partly that of the columnist in the newspaper. In interpreting the news the radio commentator plays a prominent part in the public opinion process. He selects the news that he will interpret, and he decides to ignore other news. In his interpretation of the news he has wide leeway. He can stir people up or he can lull them into a nonchalant contentment. He can arouse his listeners or put them to sleep.³

² W. H. Wilke, "An Experimental Comparison of the Speech, the Radio, and the Printed Page as Propaganda Devices," *Archives of Psychology*, No. 169, 1934.

³ For an analysis of the methods of radio commentators, such as H. V. Kaltenborn, Raymond Swing, Walter Winchell, Gabriel Heatter, see David

The number of commentators and the amount of their daily time on the air have been increasing greatly in recent years. Many of the news broadcasts are sponsored by business interests, but there may be little connection between the business of the sponsor and the program of the commentator. Other commentators may be paid propagandists. Moreover, the time of a few commentators may be paid for by sponsors whose identity is not released. The commentator may pose as a free lance broadcaster and at the same time subtly color his news interpretations to suit his unannounced employer. The concealment of the real sponsor makes this problem difficult to study and puts the public at the mercy of shrewd propagandists. While a broadcasting company may announce the general sponsorship, it does not always indicate the specific interest of that sponsor. Special interests seeking their own gain sometimes hide behind high-sounding, patriotic titles. All such generalized sponsors are to be viewed askance, for as opinion-makers they are not to be trusted to safeguard human welfare.

At election times the radio news may be highly colored. The radio station or chain frankly meets the problem by announcing the particular broadcasts which are paid political programs. In a pre-election period many controversial questions are handled on the radio, but the broadcasting company protects itself by indicating that it is not responsible for what is broadcast.

The relative influence of the radio and the newspaper on public opinion is difficult to gauge. That the radio is a serious competitor of the press in some ways may be judged by the fact that newspaper corporations have played a considerable part in the ownership and operation of radio stations. Many people are getting almost all their news over the radio; they rarely read a newspaper. Others depend largely on the radio but occasionally sit down and read a newspaper as an interesting diversion. Many housewives listen regularly to the radio but read a newspaper only intermittently.

There are large numbers of people who both "dial in" for the news two or three times daily and read the newspaper regularly. From the radio they get the latest news, literally up-to-the-minute news. They get the news headlines as they come

to them over the radio. Then they read newspapers for the details and the interesting particulars that the broadcaster does not have time to give. In this way the radio and the newspaper play complementary roles in influencing personal opinions and in giving backgrounds for opinion-making.

Together the radio broadcaster of news and the radio commentator on news are bound to perform an increasingly important function in the formation of public opinion. Commentators, along with columnists, have been credited with having "more influence than any other factor in molding the opinions of adult Americans."⁴ Each has his own fundamental part: one in feeding people with the latest events of the world no matter whether they happen far away or near; the other in interpreting the meaning of daily events within a few hours after these happenings have occurred. Then, on special occasions such as campaigns and crises, both speed up their work in jointly telling and explaining what has transpired. The world thus is headed toward becoming a gigantic kaleidoscopic public with whirling centers of excited opinion flashing high, now here, now there, with less excited reactions between. In the whirling centers of current events public opinion is being made, unmade, or transformed amidst great excitement and inflammable feeling. In the interstitial areas sober opinions develop and function on the basis of careful thinking.

2. *Organized Talks*

Along with the reporting and interpreting of the news, the radio influences public opinion through organized talks, dialogues, forums, political speeches, sermons. The range is wide and different types of publics are affected. Like the interpretations by the news commentators, these talks and speeches are of a serious nature and appeal to thinking people of one school of thought or another.

There is a tendency to break up lectures and talks over the radio into conversations between two or more people. The radio station has found that its listeners tire very quickly in listening to a lecturer, especially if he becomes pedantic or formal. To sustain attention of large numbers of listeners the talk or lec-

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

ture is given verve by releasing it on a conversational plane. In this way dry facts or deep arguments may be personalized sufficiently to maintain the attention of large publics.

Exceptions to this type of situation are sermons or religious addresses which by their nature appeal to special audiences. The sermon or religious service already has its clientele, and an interested public waiting to hear it. Moreover, these publics are spiritually attuned to what they are listening and the results are those of rededication, realignment, reenlivenment of lagging spirits.

Another type of exception is represented by campaign speeches. These also have their own clienteles who by listening in are made doubly certain that their political opinions are correct. Since the issues are usually controversial the main publics are partisan in nature, well defined, and mutually antagonistic.

The influence of the radio in issuing calls to action, in bringing stragglers into line, in arousing laggards is supplemented by another stream of influence. This is the power of facts that are brought to bear upon the independent thinkers, upon those whose minds are not yet made up, upon the nonconformists. The aim of the radio speaker is that of presenting a fact or an argument in a few minutes so emphatically and convincingly that the uncommitted person will make up his mind and become a partisan on the side of the speaker.

The radio as a university of the air has made considerable headway. It is a special kind of educational institution. Its appeal to thinkers, to those who wish to learn, to all who belong to the school of adult education is widespread. It creates thoughtful opinions on all important questions. To this end large numbers of people weekly tune in to their favorite lecturer or speaker.

Closely related are the forums of the air. University professors, distinguished leaders of nations, prominent scientists, partake jointly in discussing with noticeable frankness the many public issues of the day. The sum total of this influence caught by the force of an abiding interest, and exercised by broadcasting of facts, by the spell of human voices, by the regularity of carefully planned programs is doubtless great.

Listening-in groups have been organized for a number of the

forums of the air. These groups meet regularly, and after each radio forum is concluded the members enter into a discussion of their own regarding the topic of the forum. Many members prepare beforehand by careful reading on the forthcoming forum topics. Some groups meet preceding the forum hour to listen to a short talk by one of their own members on the subject that is about to be discussed over the air.

So significant is this development that an entire volume has been devoted to its analysis.⁵ The authors of this book estimated that there were as many as 15,000 listening discussion groups in the United States in 1940 and that a third of a million people participated. The appeal is to all economic levels. Self-improvement is the chief goal. The young and the middle-aged are especially interested. People in England, Scandinavian countries, Czechoslovakia, and the United States are among the countries in which radio-listening groups have developed furthest. However, most of these groups have suffered from lack of adequate leadership and as a result many have been short-lived.

These groups are of greatest import in the public opinion process when definitely sponsored by a community group. Sometimes the listening discussion group has its program prepared by a Parent-Teacher Association or an extension division of a university. The Town Meeting of the Air of New York has an advisory service.

Sometimes the radio listening service offers a correspondence course. Questions are submitted over the radio and answers are mailed into headquarters. In this way a real educational influence is exerted on public opinion.

Universities in the United States at one time considered the inauguration of radio courses of study including the granting of credits. But the technique has never been worked out satisfactorily and the classroom with the presence of the instructor retains its place in the system of education. When radio became a big business, university radio stations and university-directed programs declined in importance.

Speeches by politicians and by statesmen are often made over the air as a sounding board of public opinion. The nature of

⁵ Frank E. Hill and W. E. Williams, *Radio's Listening Groups* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

the mail that a radio speaker receives after giving an address that advocates some new idea is revealing with reference to public opinion regarding the particular proposal.

In considering the influence of the radio upon personal opinion, an ingenious device has been developed. It is known as the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer, and is a device for recording a "listener's reactions to a radio program while he is hearing it."⁶ If the listener likes a part of a program he presses a green button that he holds in one hand, and keeps the button pressed. He releases the green button as soon as the program has no special appeal. Likewise, he presses a red button in the other hand for those parts of a radio program that he dislikes. When he neither likes nor dislikes certain parts of the given program, he presses neither button. The buttons are connected electrically with pens resting on continually moving paper tape. The reactions are synchronised with the program, and as many as ten listeners can use one analyzer at a time and register their continuing but varying and different reactions to a given program in terms of liking, disliking, and being indifferent. A study of the paper tape discloses favorable, unfavorable, and indifferent reactions to a radio program, and hence reveals something significant regarding the personal opinions about particular radio programs.

The reactions of public opinion to radio programs are not truly representative. Only those who are most enthusiastic or most offended "write in." Only those who are most accustomed to expressing themselves openly are likely to give their reactions by mail. However, it is conceivable that even a president of the United States could use a radio speech as a sounding board of the state of public opinion throughout the nation regarding an important problem.

3. *Radio Across National Boundaries*

At the time that short-wave broadcasting came into use between the people of different nations in the late Twenties, hypernationalism had developed to the point where nations were exceedingly suspicious of each others' motives. One nation after another raised the bars against immigration.

⁶ Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank M. Stanton, editors, *Radio Research* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), pp. 266 ff.

However, at this time international broadcasting was rapidly on the increase. Ideas were being shuttled back and forth between peoples with increasing frequency. Short-wave receivers were multiplying in many lands. It appeared that the loss in cultural contacts due to the stoppage of migration would be more than overcome by the rise of international radio (aided by the development of international aviation). But just as the short wave was beginning to supplant immigration and to establish its own international contacts, the hypernationalism movement gained new momentum and cut off many short-wave contacts.

When the Nazis came into power in Germany in 1933 they at once feared the influence of the Russian communist broadcasts on public opinion in Germany. They proceeded in two ways to overcome this influence. They forbade their own citizens to listen in, they put a penalty on the use of any short-wave receiving sets, and they favored weak sets so that listeners near the boundary of Germany would not be able to hear foreign broadcasts.

The other method was "to jam" the broadcasting channels used by Russian radios. In this way the people of one country were prevented from understanding the broadcasts that were coming in over national boundaries.

By such methods many countries for long or short periods of time have cut down influences over the air from "enemy countries." However, each nation has continued to broadcast by short wave to neutral and friendly nations. This broadcasting has at times degenerated into propaganda speeches. The chances for countries to exchange culture traits freely by radio have been running low for some time.

However, radio reports do jump boundary lines between nations and are heard in surreptitious ways. Underground methods are resorted to in the use of the radio when above-board methods are suppressed. The amount of interstate communication between friends is great, even between those in "enemy countries" and among suppressed peoples in different nations. Thus the radio plays a hidden but important role in influencing international opinion.

"Good neighbor" broadcasts are likewise significant. While talk and promises over the air are by themselves of little value yet they help to create a helpful atmosphere for more tangible

interaction. People easily become fed up on "good neighbor speeches" no matter what the vehicle, and yet "good neighbor" broadcasts receive the attention of countless people who would not otherwise be reached. Their influence is great, if pleasing words are supported by deeds.

The future holds limitless possibilities for international radio, not only in wartime (see next section), but in the days of peace and good will. In conjunction with international aviation, short-wave communication will tie peoples closely together, providing they already have some similarities in current ideas and institutions. It may also help in bringing nations of different ideologies into some degree of understanding, even though the listening is done with skeptical ears.

Directed by an international university that is conducted in freedom, operating under the auspices of a research commission of a federation of nations, radio has future possibilities of developing a world opinion on many vital themes. It also may mold and reshape national opinion in all parts of the world.

4. *Wartime Programs*

In discussing wartime radio Dr. M. H. Neumeyer has presented some important facts.⁷ The radio has been characterized as a fourth front in war—the others being land, sea, and air in their use of military weapons. The great nations in war use giant short-wave transmitters, called Big Berthas, shooting their messages across whole continents and oceans.⁸

Radio in wartime functions as an instrument of propaganda. It endeavors to keep up the courage of the people at home, it tries to weaken the unity of the foe, and it seeks to gain the support of neutral peoples.⁹ The handling of the radio in wartime is an exceedingly delicate matter. A wrong word sent out over the radio cannot be stopped or recalled. It reaches around the world, and can be made the most of by the opposition. It may become a powerful boomerang against the nation or group that erred in its broadcasting program.

⁷ M. H. Neumeyer, "Radio in Wartime," *Sociology and Social Research*, 27:95-105.

⁸ See Charles J. Rolo, *Radio Goes to War, The Fourth Front* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942).

⁹ M. H. Neumeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

Nazi Germany used the radio as a strong indoctrination mechanism on an aggressive military basis. The government made it compulsory to listen to Dr. Goebbels' programs, "in schools, factories, eating places, and in public squares."¹⁰ Appeals were made to Germans residing throughout the world to think in terms of an expanding German empire. The aim was that of arousing pride in everything German in all Germans everywhere.

Attacks were made on foreign countries, Austria, Russia, the United States. A specific aim was to divide the French. Such devastating slogans were broadcast in France as: "The English give machines, and the French give their lives," and "The British will fight to the last Frenchman."

A striking example of wartime propaganda is found in the broadcasts by "Lord Haw-Haw." He was an Englishman who tried to start a Fascist party in England and failed. He went to Germany and became a Nazi broadcaster, affecting an aristocratic accent and engaging in insinuations. To English wives who had been evacuated to the country he said: "How do you know what your husband is doing now, since you are safely out of town"; and to English working people he declared: "The Führer realized that the British upper-class brought on this war and are using you as cannon fodder."¹¹ Then there was "Lord Hee-Haw," an American born in Iowa, who fought in World War I, married a German woman and went to Germany, and who became a chief Nazi broadcaster prior to December 7, 1941. His propaganda trick was to broadcast "letters" to "Dear Harry." He tried to drive a wedge between England and the United States by playing up English antagonism to things American.¹² There is no way of knowing how far public opinion was influenced in England by "Lord Haw-Haw" and in the United States by "Lord Hee-Haw." Probably the influence was great, until the listeners "caught on."

The interplay between radio programs in countries at war reached a complex state early in World War II. It had both humorous and serious aspects. For example: When Berlin presented news reports to the Germans, Moscow station announcers

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹ Alan A. Mitchie, "War as Fought by Radio," *Reader's Digest*, 36:17.

¹² See Charles J. Rolo, *loc. cit.*

used the same wave lengths and waited for breaks in the program and added clever rejoinders. "When the Berlin station signs off, Moscow continues to broadcast on the same wavelength in German, impersonating Goebbels or Der Führer himself."¹³ Berlin replied by "jamming" this wave length as quickly as possible. Thus the Battle of the Radio goes on in wartime.

5. *Political and Commercial Radio*

The ways in which political and commercial uses of the radio affect public opinion are devious. Political propaganda over the radio makes the broadcasting systems jittery. They accept it in pre-election days, as already noted, but they are careful to announce that they are in no way responsible for the ideas expressed by the speakers. Moreover they insist that no names be called, that "personalities" be kept out of the speeches, and that "political skits" not be given. "Only straightforward statements of fact and opinion" are permitted.¹⁴

The stations are fearful of being the means of creating crowd psychology and hence of starting riots, which would throw the stations definitely into the hands of the government. The experience with Orson Welles' broadcast of an imaginary attack on the earth by enemies from Mars was most startling because of the panic which many thousands of persons exhibited. The details of the reported invasion from Mars as given out over the radio by Welles were so realistic and so plausible that "long before the broadcast had ended, people all over the United States were praying, crying, fleeing frantically to escape death from the Martians."¹⁵ These dire results of dramatic broadcasting are explained by Cantril largely in terms of suggestibility. Some individuals responded because they had mental sets leading them to interpret the Martian invasion as being the end of the world. Others became panicky because they lacked adequate standards for judging such a broadcast. Others experienced feelings of panic because they lacked the ability to inter-

¹³ M. H. Neumeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹⁴ William Albright, *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), p. 356.

¹⁵ From summary by Hadley Cantril in Newcomb, Hartley, and others, *Readings in Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), pp. 619 ff.

pret the invasion of Martians in any other way than given by the broadcasters.¹⁶

The results of the invasion-from-Mars broadcast taught the radio stations the dangers to which they were subject if they allowed appeals to the masses involving the arousal of fear or hatred to go out over the ether waves. Stirring appeals to public emotions are carefully checked. During World War II, for example, the ways in which some sponsors of programs, usually advertisers, dragged in the war as a back-log for buying their particular wares in each case grew ridiculous. For a candy "sponsor" to get a high government official to give a talk on how food for the soldiers is receiving scientific attention, adding that candy is highly prized by all the boys in uniform, and then for the sponsor to present a "line" in behalf of its own candy, is almost brazen.

A subtle form of radio propaganda is the common practice of entertaining the public, or particular publics, in connection with advertisement of wares. Many of these programs have considerable merit in themselves. Some of the programs are high in quality, such as those presenting classical music. Moreover, the best of these keep the advertising down to a minimum. The exceedingly pleasing programs have indirect influences on public opinion. They stimulate countless people to tell their friends after each program about its excellence, and in so doing they mention it, usually by its sponsor's name. The pleasing atmosphere that is created is transferred to the person or agency which puts on the approved program. Certain programs achieve nation-wide commendation because of their artistic excellence, and as a result the advertiser reaps a harvest of good will.

The influence of radio programs upon public taste, as a phase of public opinion, has been widely debated. A consensus indicates that "commercial broadcasting, preoccupied with the size of its audiences, has had no incentive to provide a gradually rising standard of programs in an attempt to refine popular taste."¹⁷ The assumption has been that in order to acquire large publics, a commercial sponsor must "jazz up" his program. Only a few sponsors have indicated any serious interest in actually raising public listening standards.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

6. Control of the Radio

When radio stations almost universally require scripts from their speakers, they indicate the need for control over their programs. The stations scrutinize every word of these documents in order that no important part of the public will be antagonized. Like the newspapers they do not wish to offend large-scale commercial advertisers. They do not wish to antagonize the religious public. They do not allow races to be attacked. They protect leaders in all fields. They cannot offend the public taste or allow public morals to be shocked. They do not want to be taken over and operated by the government. As a result of all these dangers the stations study carefully the influence of their programs on the general public.

Sometimes they go too far, as in the case of two leading broadcasting companies who refused in September, 1942, to sell time over their circuits to consumers' co-operatives as represented by the Co-operative League of the U.S.A. Despite the fact that these co-operative groups of consumers in every state in the Union have been following the principles of democracy, have supported free enterprise and private property, have favored individual and loyal community autonomy rather than state ownership, the broadcasting systems gave as their reason for refusing to sell time over the air that the co-operatives' program would be controversial; and yet the same broadcasting systems continued to sell time to political parties which discuss decidedly controversial issues, and allowed other businesses to high-pressure the public over the air. A type of control which is discriminatory does the radio more harm than good and tends to stimulate the movement to make the radio a public utility.

Criticism of the radio arises freely from the public. No one knows the amount of "dialing out" that is done. It would be significant if the public had some effective way of indicating the amount of dialing out that it does, and in what connections unfavorable reactions are experienced.

Sponsors also have an effective way of reacting against radio programs that they consider inimical to their general interests. They will cease, for example, to buy time from a station which

allows programs that may turn the public against them. Hence stations are very responsive to the opinion of sponsors.

The question of government control of the radio brings a vital problem into the foreground. Many people believe that an instrument of communication so directly related to the formation of public opinion as the radio should be owned and controlled by the State. It is being urged that the reach and the speed of the radio make it so powerful an instrument of communication that its ownership should no longer be left in the hands of commercial interests governed by profits standards.

These advocates of public control of the radio are joined by countless discomfited persons who protest vigorously against the raucous notes of many advertiser announcers. It is the repeated interruption of a highly beautiful program by the jarring notes of the representative of this corn plaster or of that patent medicine which at times turns public opinion against private commercial broadcasting.

On the other hand there is the British system, operated by the British Broadcasting Corporation, a monopoly, but not a government-controlled monopoly, as that term would be understood in the United States. The BBC is a public corporation that is headed by a board of directors who function within certain general rules somewhat as the private radio corporations operate within the rules of the Federal Communications Commission. The Postmaster General, in whose Department the BBC functions, has rarely interfered with the programs as devised by the Board of Directors of the BBC. The BBC has a wide hearing for its three types of programs—the home program, the lighter program, and the great-literature and great-music program. It is reported that 93 per cent of the homes of Great Britain have receiving sets and that two out of every three Britons listen to some program every evening.¹⁸

Moreover, the BBC operates not entirely on the basis of what the people want, but partly on the basis of what its Board of Directors think that the people need. The Board is composed of civil servants, not of political party servants but of persons most of whom have some of the Oxford and Cambridge traditions. It aims to offer the people “a good fare” and hopes that

¹⁸ Charles A. Siepmann, *Radio, Television, and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 130.

the people will learn to appreciate it. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it may be noted, does not seek "to obtain a mass audience all the time." The existence of minority groups is recognized and programs are arranged for them at popular hours.¹⁹

During the short life of radio broadcasting (since 1921), remarkable changes have occurred. Not the least important of these is that it has moved from "an adjunct of the press and an added resource for long-distance telephony" to "a form of political warfare and a new arm of international diplomacy."²⁰ In 1933 Nazi Germany inaugurated this development and by 1939 was broadcasting in many countries, using many languages. Italy followed suit, and so did Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., and other countries. In early 1945 the United States was broadcasting around the clock in forty or more languages.²¹ In 1946 the United Nations began broadcasting and in 1950 introduced some of its discussions to the world through television. A problem of international broadcasting is that it is done by short-wave and that it is not heard except by those who have short-wave receiving sets. Another problem is that the government of one nation may systematically jam the radio channels used by another country and thus prevent its people from hearing what another country is broadcasting. Another difficulty is due to the fact that international broadcasting has to be carried on in scores of different languages. Behind these developments and problems is the additional fact that modern international relations are being recognized as matters involving "peoples, not merely governments."²²

The dilemma is this: Is the radio in the hands of powerful private corporations or the radio in the hands of a powerful public corporation the more likely to foster a freely developed public opinion? In which case will public opinion be the freer to be expressed? While many people take sides, others believe that the radio may remain privately owned and operated only if it becomes something of a public trust. A democratic procedure would allow the radio station to remain in those private

¹⁹ Quoted by Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 298.

hands which would put foremost the general welfare. But would this procedure be feasible? If a government takes over, will individuals have as much freedom as now in expressing personal opinions? If in either procedure democracy cannot be adequately safeguarded, then co-operative associations of consumers will be stimulated to build more broadcasting stations. Since these will be owned by the people as their private property, democratic results may be achieved.

7. Rise of Television

As television adds its charms to radio, and moving pictures enter the homes of the people daily, the results upon public opinion magnify the present role of radio. While the kind of influence upon public opinion probably will not change, yet the amount and force are multiplied. Television "combines the aural powers of the radio with the visual attractions of the movies, and it adds to them a sense of reality."²³

Public reaction to television has been quick and extensive. In 1945 there were six television stations in the United States; in 1950, there were ninety-eight. In 1945 there were 7,000 receiving sets; in 1950, over 4,000,000. This expansion has occurred despite the fact that television costs at least four times as much as radio. It has come because of public demand, which in turn springs from "the incomparable appeal of sight plus sound plus motion."²⁴ It enables its devotees "to be in two places at once," where they are sitting and where the televised action is taking place. The development of the coaxial cable and the microwave relay bids fair to join the people of the various nations and of the world some day into one listening and responding public—at least on certain points of universal need and interest. Color television will vivify current events and give them most if not all the characteristics of immediate reality.

Television has been pronounced "the poor man's latest and most prized luxury."²⁵ Hence the impact of its programs upon the public is felt widely through the lower income groups. It was expected that because of the high cost of television receiv-

²³ M. H. Neumeyer, in a review of R. W. Huddell, *4,000 Years of Television* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), in *Sociology and Social Research*, 27:331.

²⁴ Charles A. Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

ing sets the people of the higher income levels would be the main devotees. Although "the well-to-do were initially the biggest purchasers, today they are the smallest."²⁶ While women have outnumbered men as radio listeners, men have been spending the greater number of hours before television sets.²⁷ It appears that television has become a leading means of evening entertainment, that is, from 6 P.M. to 11 P.M. Neither men nor women as a whole take the time to sit before a television set for long during the day.

In a study made in 1950, Dr. E. C. McDonagh and associates found that three out of four families which have television sets are attending motion pictures less than before they had television, as compared with one out of four nontelevision families who are attending motion pictures less. Nine out of ten television families listen less to the radio, whereas one out of ten nontelevision families listen less. "Television is bringing the family members together in the home, but not necessarily in a face-to-face relation," is one of Dr. McDonagh's conclusions.²⁸ However, it may take "more than television to make a home into a family."²⁹

Riley and associates found recently that the children who now view television for two hours per evening probably did not average more than a half-hour in listening to the radio, thus "adding a completely new dimension to the experience of these children."³⁰ The effects of television programs upon children are not yet clear.

With the scientific achievements of radio and the artistry of motion pictures television can become a leading factor in the making and unmaking of public opinion. All the force of two gigantic media of mass communication will accentuate the public opinion process.

The additional sense of reality which television bids fair to achieve will be something new and powerful. By television people will be shot daily into the midst of life and death situations

²⁶ "Television Today," Columbia Broadcasting Company, May, 1949.

²⁷ Quoted from address by Oscar Katz by Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

²⁸ Edward C. McDonagh and associates, "Television and the Family," *Sociology and Social Research*, 35:81 ff.

²⁹ Charles A. Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

³⁰ J. W. Riley, F. V. Caldwell, K. F. Ruttiger, "Some Observations on the Social Effects of Television," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 13:230.

around the world almost as soon as these situations have happened and in some cases while they are still transpiring.

The control of television will constitute a well-nigh insuperable problem. Propagandists of all sorts will vie with each other to mislead mankind for the sake of certain special interests. Privately controlled television will go to the limit in putting on both helpful and harmful programs. It will arouse people to stirring pitches of enthusiasm in behalf of both constructive and destructive behavior.

If government takes over the ownership of television, again all the possible evils of bureaucracy may develop, and control from the top down will exercise unwieldy power over people. It is not too soon to develop techniques of social control of the means of mass communication which will allow them to remain in the hands of the people and yet safeguard the people against malign manipulations of opinion-making. Only thus can instruments of communication develop scientific validity and at the same time contribute to the welfare of the human race. A modern Jeremiah may safely declare: Woe to the world if television comes into general use before methods for its adequate social control are created and made practical. As the instruments for manufacturing public opinion in any desired direction multiply in effectiveness, the greater will be the need for increased and improved measures of social control.

In connection with all forms of mass communication—newspapers, motion pictures, radio, television—it has been asserted that the modern world has become a vast whispering gallery “in whose echoing corridors even the most casual remarks of public figures reverberate” and that “nations literally hang on one another’s lips, each seeking from the communicated word-clues, large and small, the mood and intention of the other.”³¹

Mass media of communication are extending their reach to every part of the world. At the same time they represent one-way traffic, with little opportunity for their subjects to talk back and to resist mass regimentation. They are being subjected to an ever-increasing degree of concentration of ownership, which means that “the hands of the few are strengthened against the

³¹ Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

many,"³² a result which calls for an increasing degree of social control over them.

From the standpoint of group dynamics mass media of communication have a serious weakness in that their one-way traffic nature hinders the development of interpersonal relations. It is only indirectly that the speaker over television and his observers and listeners can respond to him. However, he may stir up a considerable amount of interpersonal relations in the groups to which the listeners belong, and of course if there are definitely organized listening-discussion groups a dynamic social field is available for study. The ways in which the motion picture actor, the radio speaker, the television performer arouse or allay the racial, economic, national, and other prejudices of people are virgin territory for the student of public opinion who takes the group dynamics approach.³³

In mass media of communication are found the germs of a world public opinion. Today national opinion clashes with national opinion and takes into consideration national opinions of many countries in formulating its own national opinion. Out of all this interplay of national opinions on national opinions comes the first wavering elements of world opinion.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 176.

³³ Kurt Lewin, and Marian Radke, "New Trends in the Investigation of Prejudice," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 244:167-176.

CHAPTER VII

Reacting to Education

EDUCATION MAY BE USED in an inclusive way, as illustrated by the first five sections of this chapter, namely, to refer to public relations work, to advertising, to indoctrinating, to disseminating, and to teaching; or in a specialized sense, as used in the concluding section, where it is considered in its basic meaning of stimulating individuals to think for themselves, to be inventive, and even to be creative. In its most developed sense, education is the stimulating of individuals to develop their personalities to the fullest and richest degree. It extends the horizons of persons, enabling them to orient themselves constructively in a world of fellow human beings.

1. Publicizing

Publicity work is educating the public in ways that some group or institution wants the public to be educated. It is informing the public and building up a favorable public opinion regarding a given cause.

Publicity creates good will and maintains publics. It arouses or keeps alive interests. It commands attention, it starts currents of public opinion in motion, and it stimulates dynamic social action.

Publicity is the announcement of wares or services. It is telling the public about the aims and offerings of a social institution or agency. It is describing the qualifications of a candidate for office. It is reporting the good works of a social organization. It is broadcasting the achievements of a man or a machine.

Publicity has the primary purpose of informing, and the secondary one of justifying or defending. In its first role it gets people acquainted with what is going on and disseminates facts.

In its secondary role, publicity is no longer an end in itself. It develops ulterior ends; some of these may be justifiable;

others may be questionable from a social viewpoint. Its secondary role is seen when it is used as a build-up for a special interest, or a defense for a stained reputation. Publicity may be used to create good will for any kind of social organization.

The essence of publicity is to create good will, and good will has been defined as "that attitude upon the part of the public which makes it favorably disposed toward the services or products of a given company, whenever the need for this type of goods or services is felt."¹ Publicity involves the development of that intangible something by virtue of which favorable reactions by a large public may result.

Then there is self-publicity, which is employed for gaining an initial reputation, a concourse of followers, or a responsive public. While these lines are being written a radio commentator has announced that he and his wife and his children have had a picture taken this past week, and that he will send a copy free to all who will write in for one. In this way the radio speaker, through self-publicity, is endeavoring to stabilize his public.

Publicity is sometimes synonymous with what has been colloquially called "puffs" or "plugs." In other words, praise is accorded something or somebody somewhat unexpectedly, and perhaps as an aside. Later this word of praise may bring to the one praised a harvest of advantages. The good-will value in publicity was well illustrated once by William Wrigley, Jr. He was asked why he spent so much money, perhaps \$2,000,000 a year, in advertising, at a time when Wrigley's brand of gum was already universally known and was the best selling product of its kind on the market. He replied in effect that it is necessary to advertise in order to keep your name in the public's mind, or else a competitor will come along and put his name ahead of yours and then your business will decline.

Publicity has become so complicated that public relations departments in many business, educational, and other institutions have been developed to promulgate it along carefully planned lines. It is usually manned by a public relations director and his staff.

It is said that John D. Rockefeller in 1911 employed the first publicity expert. Mr. Rockefeller had been seriously and re-

¹ W. Brooke Graves, *Readings in Public Opinion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1928), pp. 575-576.

peatedly criticized for the methods used in the making of his millions. In order to put his name in a better light before the public, a publicity agent was secured at a salary of many thousands of dollars. The latter proceeded by subtle means to call attention to some of Mr. Rockefeller's fine qualities of personality, and to develop a different stereotype of Mr. Rockefeller on the part of the American public from the one which the muckrakers of the day had given him. Of course, the publicity agent could not completely change the stereotype. Two stereotypes resulted: one of a man whose business organization had used monopolistic methods and had absorbed honest but small competitors; and the other of a kindly, Christian gentleman living quietly, and doing a large amount of good in his own way.

The earliest publicity expert was prone to resort to stunts in order to create large buying publics quickly. A noted example is given in *Liberty* under the caption, "Fame Made to Order." "September Morn" was a "simple little picture of a girl standing, garbed as Eve, ankle-deep in water, modestly trying to hide her nakedness from the eyes of a prying world."² The picture was not selling. It was not an immoral picture, but it gave a publicity agent a lively opportunity. He developed a shrewd publicity-creating scheme. He called the attention of the head of the Anti-Vice Society in New York to it on display, but in the meantime he had hired ten boys and girls to view the picture. When the publicity agent and the anti-vice crusader came along by the window, there were the boys and girls pointing to the picture and making sneaking glances and suspicious grimaces. The anti-vice crusader took one look at the youngsters whose morals were evidently being degraded and "was horrified." When he ordered the owners to take down the picture they refused, and when the matter was taken to the courts by the Anti-Vice Society, the newspapers "leaped to the story with great glee." The picture became the talk of many towns and "in the next six months, 4,000,000 men and women bought it at one dollar a copy."

The publicity expert next became the representative not of one firm or agency, but of several having similar goals. He rep-

² Harry Reichenback, "Fame Made to Order," *Liberty*, January 23, 1926.

resented many organizations, or many welfare agencies, or many churches. He developed a large office with a numerous staff, with standard procedures, and with unique methods for building publics.

The publicity man uses social psychology expertly. It is his business to influence human attitudes. He is expected to make and unmake attitudes, and to make over attitudes. Today he is no longer a "mere press agent" but a person applying psychological principles in his everyday laboratory among people.

Publicity agents can make a business man who is handling large sums of money and many laborers into a great captain of industry, "a wooden Buddha, sitting in majesty in the very center of the temple, while the whole business is run by the priests."³ By the skill of the publicity expert, "a mediocre chorus girl becomes a star, a cheap painting becomes a work of art, a tawdry story of illicit love becomes a sensational novel."⁴

It has now come about that large numbers of organizations, representing a great variety of interests—commercial, educational, religious—maintain public relations departments. These carry on a regular program of sending out news items regarding work of their respective organizations. Not only business organizations but universities, churches, and public school systems thus obtain for themselves a favorable public opinion.⁵ The procedure is fully commendatory when the given institution is wholeheartedly serving the welfare of the community.

It is the function of a public relations department to do several things: (a) to keep a continual stream of news articles flowing to the press, showing what the given institution is doing in its regular work; (b) to see that the press features the activities of the institution that tie up in any way with the welfare of the public; (c) to maintain photographic activities so that pictures are furnished the press with consistency which will illustrate the outstanding work of the institution; (d) to prepare scripts and to put on special radio programs from time to time; (e) to suggest interesting exercises, such as pageants, which will draw people to a large-scale public gathering, and which in turn

³ Quoted by Graves, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁵ Avery Allen, "Public Relations for a School District," *California Journal of Secondary Education*, 21:368-372.

can be publicized in the press and over the radio; (f) to take motion pictures and stills and to arrange programs that can be put on anywhere within the area served by the institution; (g) to prepare the public by a series of notices and explanations for any new development by the institution, especially if a basic change in activity or tradition is being contemplated; (h) to be on the alert for any adverse action by any representative or employee of the institution that would create an unfavorable public opinion, and to prevent such untoward behavior or at least keep it out of the newspapers if possible, but if not possible, to instigate counter-propaganda or explanatory accounts that will soften unfavorable public reactions; and (i) to be watchful for antagonistic cliques on the outside who through jealousy or revenge are bent on exaggerating the weaknesses of the institution or on under-rating its usefulness, and to forestall or offset malicious appeals to public opinion.

It has been well suggested by Harwood L. Childs that "the basic problem of public relations is to adjust such relations to the broader aspects of social change in a way that will promote the public interest."⁶ Hence public relations work in the last analysis enables institutions to keep in step with needed social change and to assume the social responsibility which is rightfully theirs. This interpretation is far-reaching and sociologically sound.

2. Advertising

In certain aspects advertising may be viewed as a form of publicity which is purchased in order to sell goods or services. The usual media are the newspapers, the motion pictures, the radio, billboards and posters, and handbills. Advertising cashes in on the general build-up and the good will which publicity has created.

Advertising is usually signed. Its promoters announce themselves and exhibit their wares in store windows, picture them in newspapers, describe their superior qualities over the radio and television. Advertisers are prone to exaggerate the worth of their wares in order to offset the resistance of the public.

The advertiser has for years insisted on having his "ads"

⁶ Harwood L. Childs, *An Introduction to Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1940), p. 22.

published by the side of news columns, in the belief that larger numbers of the public will thereby have their attention called to the advertisements than if all the news were kept together and all the advertisements were segregated. The public has become accustomed to this way of paralleling of news with advertisements, but it objects when the radio advertisers insist on following a similar procedure too persistently.

Many radio advertisers have observed the reactions of public opinion and refuse to engage in obtrusive statements of their work, preferring to allow a program of beautiful music to stand by itself, except for the announcement of its sponsor and perhaps a sentence or two of explanation. In this way the radio advertisers withdraw from propaganda and resort to the technique of restrained publicity. They refrain from breaking into the middle of a beautiful program with a "commercial."

Perhaps the chief role of advertising in influencing public opinion is the way in which the big advertiser acts as a censor of the agency that receives the advertiser's money. If advertisements help to keep the particular medium out of the red, then the medium cannot afford to offend the advertiser, and so the latter exercises an indirect but real control over the news and over the expression of all opinions that might offend the advertiser. Thus public opinion is deprived, to an extent, of needed information and of valuable criticisms.

The advertiser makes special use of posters and billboards. The poster is an announcement of goods or services; it is placed where the public will see and read. A billboard is a bulletin board—a board upon which an announcement or poster is placed. Theaters and circuses were among the first agencies to use billboards. Later the use of posters and billboards in political campaigns grew apace. They were usually inexpensive and very temporary. After World War I the Soviet Union developed an elaborate use of substantial and attractive posters for the indoctrination of the people regarding nearly all the major phases of life under the new regime. Posters have come to be a large-scale phase of publicity work and billboard advertising of commercial wares has become a large-size business.

The billboard and poster are composed largely of pictures. They attract the eye. The billboard or poster is usually placed

in a conspicuous public location where crowds transfer from one transportation unit to another.

Posters and billboards are used extensively in time of war. They are considered effective in arousing public opinion in behalf of various kinds of war activities. Their development has become so great that they have been classified in terms of their different kinds of appeals. Outstanding among them are those which make emotional appeals to hatred on one hand and appeals to loyalty on the other. This is effective if the symbolism is not too deep. It works best when it subtly arouses curiosity regarding its meaning. The factual and informative type of poster ranks low in the United States, although in many European and other countries it has achieved wide use as a substitute for the newspaper. Somewhat strangely, the humorous poster has not made a wide appeal.

3. Indoctrinating

Indoctrination is the presentation of a system of beliefs in such a way as to have it accepted more or less uncritically. Indoctrination is related to that form of dissemination which selects certain ideas and presents them in as favorable a light as possible. It may use educational processes, chiefly indirect suggestion.

Indoctrination is widely applied to children. In their young and uncritical years most children accept what is told them by those elders in whom they have confidence. They tend to accept ideas that are presented to them which are in keeping with their feelings. Lacking breadth of knowledge they are indiscriminately subject to indoctrination.

Indoctrination of adults is easy if indoctrination is in line with their feelings and emotions, with their sentiments, and with their partisan relationships. Wishful thinking makes one subject to indoctrination in the direction of that thinking.

Indoctrination, as the name implies, relates to the spreading of doctrines. Originally these doctrines were religious, and indoctrination was a religious process. A part of Sunday School teaching is admittedly indoctrination. Some ministers would say that a large portion of their preaching is indoctrination.

Religious indoctrination, as in the case of other forms, runs a gamut. At the top is the thoughtful presentation of religious

ideas. Little or no pressure is used. People's intelligence is appealed to, and a thoughtful and free acceptance of religious doctrines is encouraged. The more liberal expressions of religious teaching make their appeal to reason.

At the bottom of this scale are highly emotional appeals to fear. Shouting may be invoked, and crowd psychology created. Dire threats against sinners are made. Some religious leaders allow no thoughtful discussion of established dogmas. There is only one religious way, and all other paths lead to destruction or eternal punishment.

Indoctrination is also political. It too runs a gamut. In democratic countries there is the greatest appeal to intelligence and the least to threats. In totalitarian countries little children are indoctrinated by the wholesale, and skeptical adults cannot voice their doubts without risking a sentence to a concentration camp. Loyalty to country and flag, when taught by indoctrination, is much less intelligent than when more rational methods are established.

Indoctrination also operates in the economic field. Capitalistic and communistic ideologies alike resort to indoctrination. Both act partly through fear and partly through desire for expansion.

Indoctrinaires in all fields watch with sensitive eyes the textbooks used in the schools. Often they spring into suppressive action on slight or imagined provocation. In their zeal they tear textbooks to pieces, leaving them limp and pointless, containing a part of the truth presented so one-sidedly that they can scarcely serve as guides to truth. Sometimes indoctrinaires have textbooks written to order. The doctrines are stated openly and authoritatively at the outset and all the later materials are selected to fit the doctrines. All other materials, no matter how much truth they contain, are banned. Even discussion of the doctrines is forbidden and the questioners, no matter how honest, are punished.

There is a serious weakness in this procedure, for it suggests that the given doctrines cannot stand up under examination. Since they are not released, even for honest study, they must be fallacious, it is claimed. To this contention it is replied that doctrines are the ripe fruits of experience and the results of careful examination by specialists and experts. The counter

reply is that while a doctrine may have proved useful a thousand years ago or even yesterday, it may be no longer fitting under the changed conditions of today, and hence needs re-examination. Or, perhaps for new conditions new doctrines are needed. The counter-counter reply is promptly forthcoming, to the effect that there are veritables, that is, truths that are the same yesterday, today, and forever, and to attack them in any shape or manner is sacrilegious. But the critics do not accept this apparently final word, and two contradictory sets of public opinion operate.

Indoctrination raises the question of ethics. How far is it justifiable to indoctrinate people, and particularly little children? Those who raise this question ask: Is it justifiable to indoctrinate one nation of little children to hate another nation, and for the other nation to do likewise, and thus lay the basis of a conflict where each nation-group tries to bomb and blow to bits the other group? Is indoctrination of the young and innocent justifiable when it leads them to acceptance of ill-founded systems of economic exploitation of the weak by the strong? These are hard nuts which the enlightened indoctrinaire has not yet cracked.

Indoctrination for the most part is identified with propaganda, although some indoctrinaires would not accept this generalization. What is the relation of indoctrination to propaganda? Doubtless there is considerable overlapping, but propaganda is more varied, more subtle, more dynamic than indoctrination.

4. Disseminating

Dissemination comes from *dis* and *seminare*, meaning to sow broadly or widely. The process of dissemination, as used here, means spreading knowledge, or distributing facts freely. The assumption is that these facts are spread abroad, irrespective of the use that may be made of them. The purpose is purely that of informing people, of giving people bases for arriving at sound personal opinions, of making an intelligent public opinion possible.

Dissemination is a basic process of education. It is the essence of a great deal of teaching. Before a child has acquired the elementary use of the tools of reading and figuring he receives

through the sense of hearing a great deal of knowledge about the world outside, and even the world inside himself. As soon as the simplest tools of communication, namely, sounds, have meanings for him he responds to the dissemination of facts and ideas.

When the child adds reading to his repertoire of understanding, a hundred and one avenues pour information (and misinformation) into his receptive mind. As his comprehension develops he becomes subject to dissemination in all its multifarious forms.

Dissemination at its best is objective, impersonal, without strings. As nature is profligate in her dissemination of seeds, so democracy is generous in her dissemination of ideas. By so doing she can be assured that while many ideas will fall on infertile soil others will germinate and be nurtured with care and develop ultimately into a wholesome public opinion.

Dissemination as here defined is wasteful, and yet it makes freedom of thought possible and stimulates democratic processes. Dissemination gives life to public opinion. If there were no free dissemination of ideas there would be no democratically derived public opinion. To the extent that a committee or a delegated body selects the ideas that a people shall be given, to that degree is the formation of a free public opinion prevented.

The question may be raised: How far does the public school system in any country disseminate ideas freely? Are there real restrictions? Of course dissemination of ideas bears a natural relation to ability to understand those ideas and a willingness to use them constructively. To give ideas to youth or to adults before they can understand them is wasteful, and to present ideas to people who will use them to destroy their fellows is unwise. In other words even free dissemination may involve some amount of selection of what will be disseminated. If care is not taken in this selective work, the public opinion process will be turned aside from a democratic course.

Free dissemination is hampered most by vested interests. The latter do not wish to be undermined by new ideas. Hence they are continually on the watch lest teachers, preachers, writers of textbooks, and other disseminators of ideas do not distribute too many new or disrupting ideas. They may use controls that

will defeat the forward movement of democratic opinion, and hence prevent the adoption of needed welfare measures.

How far do histories disseminate all the major deeds of a country, both good and bad? How far do they present the history of other countries fairly? To the degree that a history of a country is written one-sidedly, its students and its publics too are likely to become one-sided thinkers.

It may also be asked: How far do teachers of history become unduly critical of their country and arouse unfair cynicism in the minds of pupils regarding their own country? After all it is an understanding of both the good and bad points of a nation, of an average of all points, that serves best the development of a useful public opinion.

5. Teaching

Teaching is a term which comes from the Anglo-Saxon, *tæcean*, meaning "to show how." Thus, teaching is a process of training people to do things, to acquire skills, to learn to read and write, and to think in certain accepted ways. Teaching is definite, direct, planned. It shows each generation how to use the tools and culture patterns that have been developed by preceding generations.

Teaching easily becomes indoctrination. As long as it remains in the field of skills there is no such danger. When it reaches the realm of ideas, then, unless the teacher is constantly on guard, it drops into indoctrination. Most teachers have ideologies of their own and present the subject matter of their courses or lectures in the light of these ideologies. Such a tendency, however, is not inevitable. For example, a wide-awake student reports that he took a course on socialism with Professor ——— in which the strong and weak points of the subject were canvassed and at the end of the course the students could not tell whether the professor was favorable or unfavorable to socialism, so objective and impersonal had he been throughout the semester.

Teaching often takes the form of lecturing. In large university classes, especially in elementary subjects, the lecture method is followed. It is a procedure whereby a well-informed person "lectures" or "passes on" information for one class period after another, and the students "take notes." Later they

review their notes or "cram" (a colloquialism for memorizing) for an examination in which those are graded highest who memorize best and show the best comprehension of the lectures. There is little discussion and scarcely any mental give-and-take between the teacher and the students, except for an occasional request to have some point explained further. The students, generally speaking, remain passive except for the continuous note-taking. As an educational device the lecture method is economical in time and cost, but it may fall short of real teaching. The factual materials that are presented doubtless play a considerable role in the opinion-making process.

6. *Educating*

Education is a term that is used in many senses, but the best of them is suggested by the etymology of the word. Educate comes from *educere* (as distinguished from *educare*), to bring forth, or to draw out. Educate means to develop, to train in self-expression, to arouse an individual to think independently and critically, as an autonomous unit. In its highest sense education is not a process of pouring truths or untruths into a human mind, but a process of stimulating a person to gather data for himself, to do research, to seek opinions and attitudes, and then to examine these objectively, not to prove something or disprove it, but to discover the truth, to invent, to create new relationships.

It is obvious that education in this sense is the most thoughtful basis possible for a sound public opinion. If education of this type takes place freely, public opinion truly becomes the people's salvation. Education may stimulate dynamic expressions of human personality on its most rational and reasonable levels.

Education as self-expression and self-development assumes that the mutual-aid nature of human beings will bind them together and integrate the various individualistic tendencies that a free developmental education engenders. A generous development of mutuality is needed lest persons allow their freedom in education to catapult them into a thousand different and perhaps antagonistic and destructive directions.

Public opinion is not adequately grounded if it springs only from free development of personality. Public opinion is unde-

pendable and irresponsible if personality freely flaunts traditions. A free educational process functioning in connection with a rationally examined and accepted set of cultural backgrounds representing the best experience of the human race, guarantees the functioning of a far-sighted public opinion. The question arises: What methods of education best promote the free educational process? Clearly, the type that gives children a great deal of leeway in expressing their interests in activities. This type cannot rely alone on children's impulses or depend on children's experiences entirely. It calls for bases in the experiences of elders and of the human race. It requires that freedom shall operate within the limits of the common sense of mature, thoughtful people, and on the basis of the human experience of the ages.

The schools are widespread media for laying the foundations for a reliable public opinion. As a rule the schools tend to be conservative in the training of children as participants in opinion-making. The schools are a steadying influence in a world ill at ease and subject to a variety of public opinion whims and whirlpools. The schools that are democratic give youth the bases for doing more and more thinking for themselves.

In a democracy it is largely in the informal classrooms that children learn to think for themselves instead of becoming puppets and automatons as they do in totalitarian-controlled classrooms. Informal education which permits give-and-take in discussion affords a fine opportunity for training in public opinion leadership. The informal discussion group based on co-operative principles and methods illustrates education that trains for both independence and mutuality, and that guarantees the development of constructive, democratic public opinion.

CHAPTER VIII

Participating in Discussion Groups

EVERY PERSON HELPS to make democratic public opinion to the extent that he participates in discussion groups. As society increases in size and mass communication media develop, every individual needs to take part as consistently as possible in a first-hand discussion of each new aspect of public life as it develops, in order to gain a better understanding of public affairs and also in order to have a voice in making a constructive public opinion on one issue after another. Discussion groups may function so informally that everyone can be an active discussant of matters pertaining to public welfare. There are various modifications of discussion groups, such as the round table, the panel discussion group, and the open forum. A shorthand estimate of the values of discussion groups can be put in four words—creating democratic public opinion.

1. Need for Discussion Groups

Can the traditional New England town meeting of long ago be continued under modern social conditions? It has been extolled as an outstanding type of democratic procedure. People of the same community who have some acquaintance with each other come together at intervals to discuss common problems. They meet more or less as equals, although some act as leaders. Nevertheless each person has the privilege of speaking his mind, each takes part when he is moved to do so, each weighs the facts and arguments, and each has equal voice in making the final decision on every issue.

Each meeting is preceded by some preliminary discussion, some preparation, and often by the creation of a great deal of interest. The decisions are supported by widespread community opinion. Often crude in its detailed operation the town

meeting enables basic democratic principles to function with marked individual freedom, accompanied by an extensive assumption of personal responsibility.

As the town meeting grows in size it begins to lose some of its democratic functions. Its essence, which is that of a democratic discussion group, begins to be weakened. Discussion groups give way in part to reading newspapers and their editorials, but in time editorials give way to the news column with its coloration or even suppression of some of the important news. Today, democratic discussion still functions as a maker of public opinion, but it has been supplanted to a degree by mass media communication, as represented by the press and periodicals, the radio, and to a degree the motion picture, and latest of all, by television. These means of communication have their strong points but they have not equaled the strongest asset of the town meeting, namely, democratic discussion. Unless the formation of public opinion can be kept in the control of individual citizens of the nation and the world through the discussion group or some other effective method democracy will be undermined.¹

As urban life and national life become more complicated, the need for discussion groups increases greatly, for it is important that people understand what is going on all about them as well as in legislative and Congressional halls. Otherwise, unscrupulous people representing sinister interests can more and more take advantage of a people living in the sunshine of democratic liberty. When propagandists, doing the will of self-aggrandizing interests, become increasingly subtle and deceptive, the people in a democracy need to multiply their understanding of basic social and economic processes as well as of many of the details of everyday human interaction. With coloration of news values joined with news suppression, with motion pictures appealing to the emotions at the expense of careful thinking, with radio programs being sponsored by and catering to large-scale special interests, the rank and file of the people are largely helpless in defending their liberty that democracy guarantees unless they select their sources of information wisely and discuss all sides of major public issues clearly. "As thousands of groups clarify

¹ See Thomas Fansler, *Discussion Methods for Adult Groups* (New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1934).

their own purposes and carry these purposes into action, the nation moves forward.”²

Social conditions are changing so rapidly today that it is not enough for people to have thought problems through as they existed twenty years ago, or ten years ago, or even one year ago. Discussion groups that meet weekly or biweekly, with current and reliable data at hand, enable people to keep abreast intelligently of turbulent current affairs.

The times are undergoing such rapid change that it is not enough to educate youth in public problems, for by the time youth have grown to manhood and womanhood the information they received is out of date and inadequate. Hence, as adults they need to continue their education, not formally, but in systematic ways, such as are offered by discussion groups.³

2. *The Discussion Group Movement*

The discussion group movement has had several origins.

a. The philosophy of Bishop Nicolai Grundtvig (1783–1872) gave the basis for the folk schools in Denmark which were developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fundamental idea of Grundtvig’s philosophy and of its applied expression in the folk school is that people, the common people, can solve many of their social and economic problems if they will meet together in small groups and compare ideas regarding how to proceed.⁴ The people who have problems possess considerable knowledge regarding the nature of their problems and also theoretical insight in specific ways. Moreover, ideas regarding what to do will come to them if they will only throw their experiences together. They do not need to rely upon leaders so much as upon discussing their experiences and various proposals of what to do next. Step by step they can solve many of their problems by objective deliberation in the discussion group.⁵

² Chester Williams in “Foreword” to E. S. Bogardus, *Democracy by Discussion* (Washington, D. C.: American Council of Public Affairs, 1942), p. VI.

³ See Dorothy Hewitt and Kirtley F. Mather, *Adult Education, a Dynamic for Democracy* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937).

⁴ Peter Manniche, *Denmark a Social Laboratory* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1939).

⁵ Harrison S. Elliott, *The Process of Group Thinking* (New York: Association Press, 1928).

b. In Sweden this century has seen an organized development of the discussion group method. *Kooperativa Förbundet*, the national educational and business organization of the co-operative movement, has stimulated the development of small studying groups throughout the nation. They have furnished pamphlets and other materials for the use of these discussion groups. They have given training to leaders as well as to organizers of these groups. The problems of the people as consumers have received special attention.⁶ The range of discussion has extended into the field of economics and political theory. For example, in 1939, when World War II was started by Germany, the study groups throughout Sweden were discussing the same question, namely: How can Sweden meet the present crisis? Widespread public interest was aroused at an intelligent level. The results of the discussions reached government officials and served them as an index of public opinion.⁷

c. Another tangible development of study groups began in eastern Nova Scotia about 1935 when educational leaders of St. Francis Xavier University at Antigonish proclaimed that it is not enough for a university to establish adult education programs, evening schools, and summer schools. The people who need educational stimuli most are sometimes least able to come to the university.⁸ So why not take what the university has to offer to the people in their communities and into their homes? Hence the fishermen, the farmers, the miners, all ekeing out a bare existence, were stimulated to come together in small groups in their own communities and to put their mental resources together and to act co-operatively in selling the work of their hands, in building homes, and so forth. Under guidance from leaders from the Extension Division of the University, the people formed various types of co-operative organizations, and by thinking together made progress in meeting the problems of life.⁹

⁶ Axel Gjöres, *Cooperation in Sweden* (Manchester, England: The Cooperative Union, 1938), Chapter 11.

⁷ Anders Orne, *Cooperative Ideals and Problems* (Manchester, England: The Cooperative Union, 1937).

⁸ M. M. Coady, *Masters of Their Own Destiny* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939).

⁹ B. B. Fowler, *The Lord Helps Those* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1938).

d. An example may be cited of what discussion groups have achieved in the United States. In Ohio, the farmers have formed what they call advisory councils.¹⁰ These meet under the auspices of the Farm Bureau Co-operative Association, and in farmers' homes. They take up farmers' problems and problems of farm households. Their discussions follow a systematic procedure. They are canvassed regarding their problems which are urgent and need attention. These problems are classified by a central committee in Columbus and the most important and most frequently mentioned are selected as topics for the next year's discussion groups. Questions for discussion relative to each theme are made out and readings are prepared. Both are distributed to the 1,500 advisory councils throughout the state. In these ways the discussion groups (councils) plan their meetings and carry them out along group opinion lines. Many group opinions go far toward forming state-wide public opinion.

e. Another example of the role of the discussion club in the formation of public opinion is what has been called the listening—discussion group.¹¹ The members meet in homes on Thursday evenings to listen to and discuss the program each week that is broadcast under the auspices of America's Town Meeting of the Air. After listening to the program the members remain to discuss the facts and arguments as presented by the various speakers on one public affairs topic after another, week by week. Sometimes the members come a half hour or more early and discuss the topic of the Town Meeting program before it is discussed over the air. In this way the listeners get much more from the program than they would otherwise, and the post-program discussion takes on a much larger meaning.

3. *How Discussion Groups Function*

The organization of discussion groups is generally simple and under the control of the people of each community where they function.¹² The discussion groups usually meet in homes. They are purposely small in number, from six to twenty. The

¹⁰ Leo R. Ward, *Ourselves, Inc.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945).

¹¹ Frank E. Hill and W. E. Williams, *Radio's Listening Groups* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

¹² Jasper V. Garland, *Discussion Methods, Explained and Illustrated* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1938).

number needs to be large enough to generate enthusiasm and to be stimulative, and yet not so large that the more retiring members hesitate to speak up when an idea occurs to them.

It is important that no member or members monopolize the conversations, and also that every member freely takes an active part in the discussions.

The discussion group is not a debating club. No one argues for his side but each contributes what ideas occur to him on all sides of the question before the group. As a rule it is helpful that the discussion topic be presented to the members some time, at least a few days, prior to the meeting time, so that they may give thought to it, discuss it with friends, and possibly do some reading on it.

The discussion group is more than a committee meeting where time is lost on unimportant digressions, where no one is prepared but where a few may air personal biases, and where the chairman may do all the work. A discussion group is like a round-table meeting where each member in turn contributes something important to the group and receives something important in return.¹³

Two strong points about a discussion group, as mentioned by LeRoy E. Bowman, are first, a sense of equality that every member feels, and hence, second, a sense of assurance.¹⁴ In line with these characteristics is the fact that each group member experiences a sense of responsibility for whatever transpires in the group. If one member talks too much the other members indicate their embarrassment. If the leader directs the discussion too much, the members ask for more opportunity. If the discussion "runs in circles," the members are aware and try to move forward. If a member is opinionated and refuses to change his opinion, someone reminds him that a characteristic of all thinking persons is that they change their minds. If anyone is guilty of sliding over the facts, he is at once asked for an explanation. Frankness prevails in a democratic discussion group and all learn the discussion method "more by experience than by being told how to talk."¹⁵

¹³ Alfred W. Sheffield, *Creative Discussion* (New York: Association Press, 1936).

¹⁴ LeRoy E. Bowman, *How to Lead Discussion* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1934), p. 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 18, 23, 28.

Usually the discussion group meeting is followed by a social hour and refreshments. Sometimes families gather, with special activities such as games being provided separately for the children. In this way a family is kept together and all spend the evening in ways of especial interest to each. The discussion group thus becomes a part of a larger pattern of playing together and thinking together.

A special type of discussion club is the reading circle group. According to this procedure ten persons, for example, agree to meet once a month for ten months to read, review, and discuss one book each dealing with questions of the day. At the first meeting many current books are mentioned and contents cited. Then a vote is taken as to the ten books the members believe they would like to know more about. Each selects one and purchases it. He reads and reviews it at a time previously scheduled. A discussion follows on its main points. Each book in order is considered by the discussion group. Each member reads only one book but hears the contents of nine others presented. Thus each member is able to add extensively to his knowledge on current affairs and to play a more intelligent public opinion role.

Another type of discussion group is the one that is advanced in subject matter. Leaders in a given field get together regularly to discuss underlying problems of a theoretical nature. They recognize that as a bridge will not stand unless built according to sound engineering theory, so a public affairs program will be no sounder than the sociological theory according to which it is developed. Common sense is not enough in building either bridges or public policies. Discussion clubs build on experiential theory rather than on mere armchair reasoning. The only reliable public opinion is that which is grounded in sound theoretical knowledge.

Public policies cannot be put into action democratically unless supported by an intelligent public opinion. Discussion clubs have a wide-open field for devising means of giving the public basic knowledge that will enable people generally to enter understandingly into the promulgation of new social, economic, health, and other needed welfare measures.

If a discussion group is interested in considering current affairs regularly, it will find the daily newspaper of use in a

number of ways. First, the newspaper will serve notice concerning new problems as they arise, indicate changes in the nature of problems, the partial or extensive solutions that are being made of problems, the opinions of various persons, including columnists, concerning the given problems.

Second, the newspaper will give clues to persons who may have valuable information on a given problem. If a race riot has occurred, the newspaper will give the names of persons who have been involved in one way or another and who may be interviewed by selected members of the discussion club and who thus may furnish the latest reliable data for discussion purposes. A clipping system of a daily newspaper may be adopted to advantage on specific topics by a discussion group. Such a system may become increasingly valuable as it grows, providing it is carefully indexed and the index is kept up-to-date.

Many discussion groups become study-action groups. That is to say, they are groups which meet to study what action the larger organization to which they belong shall take next, or how this organization shall meet its urgent problems. For example, the members of a consumer co-operative may meet in study-action groups to consider what action shall be pursued by the co-operative regarding one problem after another that the co-operative experiences. The reports of these discussion meetings are sent regularly to the board of directors for its guidance.

Special attention has been given to discussion group method by the "Great Books of Western Civilization" organization. In the first thirty months of experience with this procedure in one city, nearly one hundred groups functioned with approximately 1,000 individuals attending group meetings a total of about 12,000 times, discussing one hundred titles by seventy-five authors. The discussion meetings were usually held weekly for two-hour periods. Most of the groups met in branch libraries. The leader was found to be highly important. The best leader was judged to be not a teacher or an expert, but a well-informed person who is interested in people and who brings out questions, answers, and more questions.¹⁶

¹⁶ George F. Bowerman, "Great Books of Western Civilization," *The Library Quarterly*, 18:52-59.

The large discussion meeting of fifty persons, more or less, may be distinguished from the small discussion group of a dozen persons. In planning for this type of discussion procedure, a half-dozen leaders may be selected and each asked to present in a few minutes one each of half-a-dozen subtopics arranged in an orderly fashion. Then the chairman opens the discussion by calling for questions or comments and by directing the questions to the appropriate discussion leader. This is a simplified form of the panel type of discussion and under proper guidance of the leader may be turned into a free-for-all discussion group. At a time agreed upon beforehand the chairman sums up the main points that have been presented.

Since discussion groups are first of all informal they need little organization. For example, they do not require a constitution and by-laws or regular officers. An efficient secretary will usually be able to meet the situation. Such a person can arrange dates and places (in homes) for the group meetings, keep the members informed about any changes in dates and meeting places, make reading lists or outlines of topics or problems to be discussed, keep minutes of the meetings, and send these regularly to the secretary of the larger organization. A different chairman may be chosen by the group for each meeting. His chief responsibilities will be to call the meeting into session promptly and close it on time unless the members decide to extend the closing time, see that the discussion "goes around the room" giving every member equal opportunity with all the others to take part freely, allow no talkative member to take more than his share of time, encourage the timid member, and, from time to time, summarize any points that may receive general agreement.¹⁷

The five steps in discussion-action group procedure as outlined by D. M. Hall of the University of Illinois give a standard pattern that can be varied to suit any discussion group need.¹⁸ They are: (a) to explore a social situation in order to discover what is unsatisfactory; (b) to nail down or define carefully the actual problem that needs to be discussed; (c) to find out what are the various solutions that may be followed; (d) to compare

¹⁷ Frank Walser, *The Art of Conference* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938).

¹⁸ *The Co-operative Consumer* (Kansas City), 16:5, July 30, 1949.

the merits and elements of each proposed line of action with the other proposals and to decide on the best one; and (e) to decide on who is to do what.

There are several desirable roles and a number of undesirable roles that the individual members may play in a discussion group. According to Dr. Hall the desirable roles may be denominated: "Initiator, orienter, facilitator, harmonizer, fact-seeker, fact-giver, summarizer, compromiser, expediter, analyzer, evaluator, recorder, and spokesman."¹⁹

Each of these roles may be examined with care and different members of a discussion group may select one or more roles as he wishes and as the needs of the group require.

The undesirable roles are: "aggressor, blocker, recognition-seeker, dodger, dominator, sympathy-seeker, special-interest pleader, and blamer."²⁰ Each of the undesirable roles may be briefly analyzed at the beginning of a series of discussion group meetings, and additional undesirable roles may be added to the list. The psychological effects on the members may be excellent.

The best aim in a discussion group is to obtain a consensus. A majority opinion is usually not enough, for a minority may have ideas that call for further discussion. Every majority opinion started with a few people and was virtually at one time a minority opinion. The objectification of attitudes is the only sound basis for the best discussion group procedure. Partisanship and heated speeches have no place in discussion groups. Some of the best methods used in discussion are considered by the writer in his *Democracy by Discussion*.²¹

4. Modified Discussion Groups

The ordinary committee meeting is perhaps the most common form of discussion group. Its simplicity is its weakness. Almost anyone can appoint and call together a committee on any subject. The weaknesses as a democratic instrument are many. The chairman is often the only one who is prepared to discuss the question at issue. The other members may leave the responsibilities of preparation to the chairman and attend with

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ E. S. Bogardus, *Democracy by Discussion* (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942), pp. 44-56.

little more than opinions of the moment to offer. The shallow discussion settles little and yet it may drag on so long that the more discerning members become bored and conclude that much time has been wasted.

Basically the committee meeting is a sound type of discussion group. To live up to its possibilities the chairman will indicate the questions to be discussed when the meeting is called and as many members as possible will give attention to the questions beforehand and gather some facts to contribute to the discussion. In this way a committee may arrive without unnecessary delay at significant decisions.

The round table is often a productive discussion group. Originally it was a group which met around a table. Each member was on a par with every other member as far as talking privileges were concerned. Each could reap the stimuli that came from looking into the eyes of all the other members when he talked. There was no leader in the ordinary sense, but someone was assigned to sum up the discussion and state the conclusions.²²

Several round tables may meet simultaneously, with each discussing some particular aspect of a larger topic. Each has a secretary and spokesman. The latter presents the conclusions of his group to the meeting of all the discussion groups when they come together as a single group. The conclusions are pooled in the larger group, a summary is given, discussion follows, and a decision is made. The round table usually meets but once, or only a few times in close succession, and lacks the continuity of a discussion group that meets weekly or monthly over a long period of time.

The panel type of discussion group is composed of experts. Each is assigned a phase of a topic in connection with which he has special knowledge based on a substantial degree of experience. Each presents crisply and in turn his major points. When all have laid their facts upon the table as it were, each is questioned by any or all of the others. In fact the panel becomes a kind of a free-for-all conversation group. The panel functions in the presence of an audience whose members are

²² Clarence R. Athearn, *Discussing Religion Creatively* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939), p. 62.

also given opportunity to question the panel members. The chairman sums up the "findings" as he judges them.²³

A panel is a discussion group of experts appearing publicly. It is important that each member be so seated that he can speak to the other members and yet at the same time be heard by the audience. Sometimes a panel discussion is dramatized with the members coming on the stage one at a time, being introduced by the chairman who makes his initial remarks before the others appear (although the latter are listening in off stage). When all have spoken and are seated in a semicircle facing the audience, the conversational discussion begins.

It is important that the panel members be persons with something important to say, that they speak distinctly, interestingly, and succinctly. It is also important that the panel leader allow no one panel member to monopolize the discussion and that he handle the questions from the audience discreetly. If he repeats each question or even rephrases it the audience will be sure to hear it and to understand it. He refers the question to the panel member best qualified to discuss it. He also has the problem of keeping an audience member from airing his own views at length. He keeps the discussion from becoming a debate, from dealing in personalities, from digressing too far from the main topic. He does best who succeeds in turning the panel members and the audience into one big discussion family.²⁴

The forum was originally a gathering place out of doors for political and other types of meetings. The Town Meeting of the Air is an outstanding example of a modern forum, as distinguished from the ancient Roman Forum. The main program is usually a debate between representatives of two opposing views of a public issue. A discussion follows in which members of the audience are permitted to ask questions of the various debaters. In some forums there is only one main speaker and members of the audience are allowed to make short talks on the given subject. The forum may be defined as a lecture or debate followed by orderly discussion. Sometimes the debate or discussion confuses rather than clarifies the issue under consideration.

In a forum meeting slips of paper may be passed about and all in attendance invited to submit one or more questions at

²³ Fansler, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

²⁴ Hewitt and Mather, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

the conclusion of the main talk or talks. These are quickly organized by the chairman so that the discussion has some order. In this way the timid members have a chance to participate by asking questions in written form.

The classroom in school or college may represent a fine type of discussion group, providing the lecture method is not followed. W. H. Kilpatrick of Columbia University has been noted for his ability to turn a class of 300 into a real discussion group. Of course the members, being teachers, were already informed persons and more or less homogeneous. The discussion leader in a classroom is careful not to allow a few to monopolize the discussion. Sometimes the members of a class choose one after another of their own members as chairmen who thus acquire experience as discussion group leaders.

The workshop, as developed by educators, may be viewed as a superior type of discussion group. In particular the intercultural workshop, while belonging to the discussion groups of larger size (perhaps forty members), succeeds unusually well in giving all the members a chance to discuss delicate matters of racial conflict with freedom. Moreover, the discussion is not conducted about racial groups but by representatives of several racial groups by themselves in each other's presence as joint members of a workshop group. The members have not only freedom but the sense of equality, the sense of assurance, the initiative to gather data in small subgroups, to present findings for discussion by the whole group, and other basic characteristics of a true discussion group. When a workshop reaches the level of the best discussion groups, a great deal of credit will go to the director of the workshop as a discussion and project leader.

The influence of a discussion group in changing the opinions and attitudes of the members has never been satisfactorily measured. However, the influence of participation in a workshop group as a type of discussion group has been tested by the writer with his social distance scale.²⁵ In 1948 an experimental group of thirty-two workshop members were matched with a control group of equal numbers on the following points: (a) university educational level, (b) type of occupation, (c) years

²⁵ E. S. Bogardus, "The Intercultural Workshop and Racial Distance," *Sociology and Social Research*, 32:798-802.

of occupational experience, (d) income level, (e) age, (f) sex, (g) type of occupation, (h) urban and rural backgrounds, (i) religious backgrounds, and (j) similar ethnic distance quotients as determined at the beginning of the experimental period.²⁶ Both groups filled out the Ethnic Distance Scale at the beginning and at the end of the workshop period of six weeks. The experimental group changed its attitudes and opinions twenty-one points in the direction of ethnic nearness, whereas the control group remained practically unchanged.²⁷

Nine months after the workshop closed twenty-eight of the original thirty-two members filled out the Ethnic Distance Scale again and it was found that the change in attitudes and opinions which occurred during the workshop experience had been maintained and that the attitudes and opinions had not slipped back to their position at the beginning of the workshop. In other words the change in attitudes and opinions resulting from participation in the workshop as a discussion group appeared to be relatively permanent.

5. *Values in Discussion Groups*

The values of discussion groups and the role which they play may now be summarized. They are democratic in spirit and they generate democratic opinion.²⁸ They are informative and give the information upon which sound opinion may be developed. They represent the most natural way of learning and promote a natural development of public opinion. They are free from all the distorting influences of propaganda devices. They seek not majority opinion but consensus. They enable people to think together, to plan together, and to work together. They promote the group process on a circular response basis, so that each stimulus results in a response which is a new stimulus that produces other responses, and thence other stimuli. They provide ordinary citizens with creative experiences that they could not otherwise know. They take time by the forelock and are instrumental in planning constructive and democratic social change.

Discussion stimulates the reasoning ability of individuals.

²⁶ Accepted (1950) for publication in the *American Sociological Review*.

²⁷ No attempt is made here to disentangle opinions from attitudes.

²⁸ See Bruno Lasker, *Democracy Through Discussion* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1949).

While not the only element in developing the reasoning factor in personal opinion, discussion as a form of democratic interaction, that is, of give and take in the mental field, and as a means of arriving at a consensus by a group, is of outstanding importance. Discussion is a sharpening of wit on wit, of reasoning on reasoning. Democratic discussion "permits a free competition of ideas," a weighing of all the facts concerning a given problem, a shifting of the true from the false. In this connection Charles W. Smith, Jr., makes an appropriate generalization: "Public opinion is normally arrived at after discussion."²⁹

In order that discussion groups may reach their greatest possibilities in developing sound public opinion, it is necessary that they be organized throughout a nation and that they function with continuity and without ceasing. This sounds like a large order. It *is* a large order, but it is the most direct way to build a democratically functioning public opinion. They need a sponsorship which has no axes to grind and which serves no interests except those of all mankind. They need sponsorship by social organizations that have standing far and wide and that are known for their devotion to the common weal, be they civic, educational, or religious, industrial, or all four.

²⁹ Charles W. Smith, Jr., *Public Opinion in a Democracy* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1942), p. 265.

CHAPTER IX

The Opinion-Making Process

THE STATEMENT that public opinion is a sum-total of personal opinions does not tell the whole story. Neither is it adequate to say that public opinion is "any collection of individual opinions regardless of degree of agreement or uniformity."¹ The making of public opinion involves social interactions based on personal opinions, discussions, transitions in thinking, resulting in decisions.

The making of public opinion is a process, that is, a social process. It is a process in which some phase of human interest is examined, and a proposed change is both supported and attacked with facts and propaganda and with some kind of a conclusion being reached.²

1. Impression-Discussion-Decision Sequences

Perhaps Edward A. Ross was one of the first to offer a definite analysis of the making of public opinion as a process. In 1908 he developed it in his *Social Psychology*.³ Ross claimed that public opinion begins (a) in the primary impressions possessed by people on given subjects. These include a congeries of prejudices, passions, notions of personal interest, affirmations, dogmas, and so on.

Then a process of change begins. (b) These primary impressions are subject to change in three ways. First, they may be deepened, reinforced, reaffirmed, and made impregnable. Or

¹ Harwood L. Childs, *Introduction to Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1940), pp. 48 and 61.

² Numerous authorities have written about public opinion in terms of a process. James Bryce had the idea of process when he wrote the first edition of his book, *The American Commonwealth*, in 1888. Graham Wallas likewise indicated that the concept was in his mind when he wrote *Human Nature in Politics* (1914).

³ Edward A. Ross, *Social Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908).

second, they may be modified. The modification may involve corrections in some particulars, but the essential impressions remain. Or third, these primary impressions may be effaced, eradicated, erased, forsaken. Generally speaking, another set of impressions or ideas may take their places.

In this process of change which Ross delineates, the time element is considered important. Even impressions may not change quickly. Ordinarily, primary impressions have sufficient basic feelings and possible sentiments involved in them so that they tend to persist. They resist change. They have vitality of their own. To modify them or to efface them requires either catastrophe or time, while even the deepening or reinforcing of them in a substantial way is usually not accomplished overnight.

This deepening, modifying, or effacing is brought about by arguments, appeals, influence of authorities, opinions of specialists, discussions, examples of superiors. In these and other ways changes are effected in the primary impressions.

(c) The third factor in the process as Ross saw it, was the registering of the aforementioned changes, commonly through the exercise of voting at a convention or on an election day. The opinions of some persons will be changed in one direction, and of others in another way. Ultimately personal opinions will be recorded and public opinion regarding given issues or candidates will be made plain. (d) The fourth factor is the embodiment of the majority opinion in a policy, procedure, law, social structure, or in social standards. The embodiment of change will find subjective expressions, e.g., in a modification of attitudes and opinions of many persons.

2. *Action-Reaction-Climax Sequence*

In an informal way Charles H. Cooley⁴ unfolded the formation of public opinion as a social process. He saw it as an organic process, following natural lines of change. It is a part, in fact, of the social process, of the whole human process of social change.

Cooley insists that a group which has discussed a problem arrives at a public opinion concerning it even though the members take sides. They have a common opinion regarding the

⁴ Charles H. Cooley, *Social Process* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1918), Chapter XXXI.

importance of the problem to the group, regarding the need of doing something about it, regarding the need of give-and-take in agreeing upon action, and regarding the importance of thinking and planning and of adequate leadership. In other words, behind the differences of opinion is the relation of the problem to the welfare of the group, to the mores, and to the underlying general opinion that is common to all.

Personal opinions may be lined up for or against, but the expression of each side tends to influence the others one way or another, and thus the process moves on. Each expression of opinion helps to form every other expression, and as Cooley suggests, "there is unity of action in Macbeth even though the players disagree."

The interstimulation phases of public opinion are usually overlooked. No one on a given side of a debate wishes to admit that his opinions have been changed in any way by the opposition. However, "communicated differences are the life of opinion, as cross-breeding is of a natural stock."

A minority opinion interests Cooley more than does a majority one. He asserts that in small and beginning minorities are often found the origins of tomorrow's majority opinion. Here the processes are at work which may dominate society a few years hence.

Minority opinions may be more dynamic than a majority opinion. A minority opinion may harbor "originality, faith, and resolution to make things better." Democracy may throb in minority opinion.

On the other hand, majority opinion, having won a victory, may rest on its laurels, go to sleep on the job, become inert and dependent on a few self-appointed beneficiaries. Majority opinion may split up into two or more minority opinions and lose its significance. It may act like a tyrant, persecute minority opinion, and incite revolution.

Public opinion, as analyzed by Cooley, runs a course after the fashion of a literary drama. There is action and reaction throughout the process. Each action produces a reaction which in turn results in another action by the first-mentioned party in the public opinion process. Thus, the contest of the conflict elements and the development of the adjustment elements un-

dergo modification as the process goes on, until the climax and conclusion are reached.

3. *Stages in Opinion Making*

In the light of the foregoing contributions⁵ and of independent studies of the writer, the major stages in public-opinion making may now be presented.

a. DISTURBANCES. Everything seems to be running smoothly in a social group when something disturbing happens. This new element in the picture may be either (1) unintentional or (2) intentional.⁶

(1) The unintentional type of disturbance may be either the work of man or nature. An invention will upset customs and traditions and start off an opinion-making process. A discovery of a large supply of natural resources or the development of new techniques for using well-known resources will produce a similar result. Many of the inventions and new techniques that accompanied the Industrial Revolution were vital disturbances to commonly accepted opinion. New technological processes today are likewise upsetting.

Nature sometimes speaks a disturbing word through catastrophe. Earthquakes or floods make necessary new measures of security and bring about changes in public opinion.

Nature and man sometimes combine to make new thinking necessary. A world-wide depression brings revolutionary changes in its wake. War is a calamity demanding new social institutions and measures for human security. After the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941, on Pearl Harbor, public opinion in the United States changed in a few hours from peace-making to war-making.

(2) The intentional type of disturbance that sets off the process of making new public opinion is represented by the social reformer. He sees how old ways are no longer adequate to meet human needs and challenges them. He perceives how people are cramped in their style or victimized by autocratic

⁵ In a study of social reform R. M. Youngman analyzes the stages in a reform movement. (Syllabus, University of Nebraska, 1926). These stages are (1) aggravation, (2) initiation, (3) discussion, (4) outlawry, and (5) enforcement.

⁶ Cf. Lawrence W. Doob, *Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), Chapter VI.

rules, and inaugurates a publicity campaign and sets forth innovations. To those whose settled ways are thus shaken the world seems about to slip backward. To vested interests all such clarification calls are maddening.

Thus, two basic but unrelated origins of the public opinion process stand out. One is a phase of the inevitable expression of physical and social change. Human beings cannot stop it; they can only adjust, or at most, put on the brakes. They can see that the best of the past is conserved until new ways demonstrate their merit.

The other source of the public opinion process is found in deliberate human disturbances of the status quo. Promptly people array themselves in conflict, which is the beginning of the second stage.

b. **PARTISANIZATION.** After disturbances develop people take sides. First, there are those who defend the old and the established as it has been developed in the past. The defenders experience emotional furore. That which they have become accustomed to and which is dear to them is about to slip away. The change seems unfair, and feelings are aroused.

The defenders are protecting the folkways, or perhaps, a part of the mores, that is, something which has long been adjudged essential to the given group's welfare. Hence, the power of group support comes to the rescue. Its strength is added to that of individuals. The prestige of the group may be at stake. If the defenders feel that they are struggling in a way for their lives, they may resort to various forms of partisan efforts, chief of which is propaganda, or a one-sided presentation of the truth as they see it. They censor reports concerning the weakness of their position. If there is time they may utilize the sounder method of education.

Of course, if nature brings about the new changes, then the defenders of precious folkways try to salvage as many of the tottering values as possible. They ultimately adjust by lamenting and accepting.

Second, there are those who favor the proposed change. Either they stand to gain by innovation, or else they take the larger social viewpoint and identify themselves with the interests of the whole.

The innovators of change may begin by adopting educational procedures, but as the pros and cons grow pronounced the innovators or advocates relinquish the slower educational methods for the quick thrusts of propaganda. Thus, both sides may become adept in hurling spears of propaganda.

Partisanization often obscures as much truth as it uncovers. Moreover, the extreme partisan on either side is blind to the whole truth. He sees his own side large and exalted, and the opposition as unrepresentative if not unworthy. He will not listen carefully to argument or facts that are presented by the opposition.

The partisan recognizes only two sides, his side and the other, but most public questions are many-sided. The partisan reacts in terms of two opposite extremes, whereas the true picture is one of degree. It is rarely wise to shift from one social procedure to an entirely different one. It is a mistake to give the right of suffrage to a whole minority group suddenly when that group is untrained to use the vote understandingly. It was not a question in 1868 of whether or not to give the Negro population as a whole the right of suffrage, but a question of which members were qualified to use it, and how fast should the vote be extended to others.

C. PROPAGANDIZATION. Propaganda, to be discussed in the following chapter, may be defined as a one-sided presentation of either the affirmative or the negative side of a question. Propaganda is no respecter of truth or morals. It lends itself with equal readiness to both the affirmative and the negative sides of a debatable issue.

Propaganda is the logical tool of partisans. In fact partisans have been the chief if not the only important agents who have developed the propaganda technique. Partisans have created propaganda.

The extreme partisan on both sides is guilty of pushing propaganda to actual misrepresentation. Propagandization itself is a process. It begins in slight exaggeration and grows and grows until it reaches deliberate deception, hypocrisy, and falsification, and then falls by its own weight of falsehood. It begins in "humorous cracks," moves on to sarcasm, and then blandly in-

dulges in invective against personal character, and in villainous insult and assault.

The aim of all this misrepresentation is to change the opinions of people from opposition or neutrality to support of the propagandists on one side or on the other. The aim is to win over or at least to intimidate the lukewarm opponents and the undecided. No expense is spared to swing personal opinion from neutrality or opposition to advocacy of the propagandist's position.

d. DISCUSSION AND EDUCATION. Throughout the process of opinion making in a democracy, discussion occurs freely and everywhere. It begins in informal talk, in talk at meal times, in living rooms, in offices, on the street, in field and barnyard. At the outset it centers in casual facts, in rumor and gossip, in hearsay and informal report.

Along with the advancing surge of propaganda, discussion grows more excited, and here and there more bitter. It may reach crescendos of shouting, and spread more heat than light.

In its mass meeting expressions it speaks on both the affirmative and the negative sides, and in either case hinders honest discussion. Speeches are punctuated with cheering or hissing. Only those ideas are released which support the side that the speaker represents.

However, behind the shouting and the tumult there is a quiet type of thinking that is going on. Independent thinkers gather here and there for sane discussion and honest searching for the truth. No housetops herald these discussions and no newspapers headline them.

That broad stretch of territory of human thought which extends between the two widely separated lines of partisan encampments is occupied by persons who seek the truth through thoughtful discussion of the facts at hand. It is populated by people skeptical of propaganda.

Out of discussion of the sober and evaluative type comes education. Facts not propaganda are at a premium. Study and even research may be brought to bear on the issues under discussion, and many people are stimulated to think new thoughts.

If one aim of discussion is to seek truth, another is to discover on which side of a conflict the greater and the more significant

truth is to be found. Open discussion recognizes from the start that some truth is found on both sides, or all sides, of any controversy or public opinion theme. It seeks from the beginning to weigh truth against truth as well as truth against falsehood.

Still another aim of discussion may be to effect changes in opinion. Each member of a discussion group may try to win other persons to his own line of thinking. But if he does not succeed he still tolerates or even respects his opponents. Unlike partisan discussion, democratic discussion uses no pressure in attempting to change the opinions of others. Democratic discussion bows its head to truth, no matter what verdict may be indicated.

e. **DECISION.** The opinion-making process sooner or later comes to a head in some kind of decision. The decision point may be registered in ballots on voting day. A democracy sets a date for voting so that proponents and opponents may arrange their appeals to public opinion accordingly. Both sets of partisans do not wish a long, drawn-out campaign in behalf of opinions and votes. If it is a national issue they are careful not to shift their partisan activities into high gear until about ten weeks before voting day. Here is a rough measure of the length of an acute bid for the support of public opinion.

These heightened spurts for the smile of public opinion may be repeated yearly or every two years or more for many decades. In the struggle for woman suffrage in the United States scores of years ensued before a majority opinion was won. At any rate the campaign must be let up from time to time, for attention grows fatigued and lags. People resent too constant and continuous a bombardment of their opinions.

In a democracy voting is made secret in order to prevent intimidation. Rigid rules that are maintained by watchers from the opposing camps are the order of the day. The heat of contest and the rigor of partisanship lead to various devices to manipulate the voting and to stuff the ballot boxes. False reports may be sprung at the last minute by either of the contending parties. The aim is to take advantage of the opposition's inability to reply on short notice. Such last minute tactics are often boomerangs. People with a sense of fair play are antagonized and votes are lost as well as gained.

f. **REDEFINITION.** A decision having been made, the people of a democracy resume their usual round of activities. The decision is announced and the defeated bow to the results. The victors rejoice and return to their accustomed tasks. Overt expressions of bitterness disappear, and the public opinion process slopes off into normal routines.

If a proposed change is defeated the victors continue their round of things as they are, until another storm breaks. They rest on the prestige of the past and the great inertia of society.

If change gains a majority opinion the defeated drop out of sight. In out-of-the-way places they may continue to follow the old and to avoid the new. The victors however quickly put the public-supported innovation into operation. They seek the fruits of a hard-earned achievement.

In either situation the victors are likely to rest on their oars, but the defeated, if sufficiently aroused emotionally, will gather their shaken forces together for a new bid for public support later on. The defeated may pull together more forcefully than ever in their plans for a new and later contest for recognition. The defeated may by virtue of defeat lay the foundations for a new and successful campaign. A defeated opinion today may gain the crown tomorrow.

Redefinition means a new concept of some of the folkways or of the mores. A victory for a new idea calls for the substitution of that idea for some old link in the folkways or mores. It means a redefinition of the culture.

A defeat of the new indicates that the old will continue to function for a period longer. If its adherents are wise they will strengthen the old by substituting valid foundations for valueless ones. They will effect a redefinition of the old in terms of the needs of a new day.

Thus, the opinion-making process ends in a greater or lesser modification of a people's ways of thinking and doing. It effects change no matter who wins. Public opinions gain momentum, move from one stage to another, reach decisions and redefinitions. In a democracy there is never a complete quiescence of public opinion. At any given time and place there are always several opinion-making processes in operation—some are just getting under way, some are approaching a climax, others are in the concluding stage.

Part III

Limitations of Public Opinion

CHAPTER X

General Weaknesses

THE WEAKNESSES of public opinion are many and serious unless people work continually to keep open and active the avenues of discussion and education. These limitations may be more or less a part of the nature of public opinion, or they may be due to factors outside of public opinion which take advantage of its limitations. Professor Edward A. Ross long ago pointed out some of these weaknesses. His strictures have been added to but not changed greatly, and the discussion in this chapter is greatly indebted to him at several points.¹

1. Intrinsic Weaknesses

a. Public opinion is not clear and precise, says Professor Ross. Perhaps it is sometimes quite specific, but at other times unclear. Perhaps it is precise in one way today and in an entirely different way tomorrow. The result is lack of precision on some matters at all times.

b. Public opinion has "a short wrath and a poor memory." This generalization is full of truth but it does not tell the whole story. Public opinion is easily stirred up but on some matters it expresses itself in a rage and then, childlike, it goes on to something else. It may take out its spite on innocent parties, and having obtained relief in this unjust way, it no longer seeks the real culprits.

A person may perform an evil deed and feel the sting of current public opinion, but a shift of public interest may occur and the person's shameful behavior may no longer be remembered. There is no loving forgiveness on the part of public opinion but merely evidence of a poor memory.

¹ Edward A. Ross, *Social Control* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901).

However, there are some fields, especially those related closely to the more significant mores, which public opinion seems never to forget. A blot on the moral character of a minister of religion is likely to follow him all his days, and a breach of virtue by a school teacher will plague her wherever she turns for a position in her profession. At least there are some fields in which opinions have a long wrath and a good memory.

c. Public opinion is often charged with being fickle and with not knowing its own mind. Examples are legion. Its origins in personal opinions that are localized in casual and miscellaneous experiences account in part for its fickleness. Its parentage in human feelings gives it an unstable lineage. Its lack of scientific standards, in fact, its flaunting of anything that is logical and well-thought-out gives it no dependableness.

The fickleness of public opinion leads it to punish minor offenses unmercifully and to skip over far more serious behavior with a casual frown. Sometimes it condemns one person viciously and condones another person guilty of a similar offense. It acts within different frames of reference from day to day or even from hour to hour.

d. Its procedure is often crude. It uses no measuring stick. It waits on no adequate investigation. It gives its victims no fair opportunity of defending themselves.

When public opinion condemns, it does so with no regard for the proprieties of the occasion. It rarely resorts to finesse. It acts at awkward moments. It "bawls out" its victims in the language of the street, and in a way characteristic of an intolerant and irate defender of the status quo. It handcuffs the delicate and refined, and respects no soft answers that ordinarily might turn away wrath.

e. Public opinion sometimes meddles when it ought to abstain, and sometimes abstains when it ought to exercise a vigorous hand. Being childlike in its attitudes it easily misjudges the relative importance of events. It feels incensed at matters that will right themselves, and overlooks other items that cry aloud for adjustment. It lays the lash on some poor soul whose misdeeds have already caused him more than enough pain, and it

doffs its hat to some shrewd social sinner who has astutely covered up his social misdeeds behind a philanthropic or patriotic gesture.

f. Public opinion may be despotic. Not having any recognized standards it is a law, or rather a despot, unto itself. It may be an expression of individualistic democracy run wild. Its feeling-borne consciousness explains why at times it cracks the whip recklessly. Contradictory is its failure to observe democratic methods when wearing the sheep's clothing of democratic ideals.

g. Public opinion is pathetic when it attempts to speak on technical questions. Its exponents rarely recognize its limitations, and consequently it speaks forth with the loud voice of would-be authority on matters where only its ignorance is evident. It rarely admits its incompetence on any matter, not even on a highly technical issue. It grows impatient with experts but expresses itself as a chief expert. Being incapable of acting as a technical authority and being impatient regarding carefully analyzed knowledge, it finds itself suspended in midair, but it blandly acts anyway. Although its judgment may fall flat, it rarely seems to learn by past mistakes. On technical matters it continues to act as its own incompetent expert.

h. Public opinion is likely to fail in all scientific fields and wherever knowledge of any specialized type is needed. It sometimes flaunts science, holds knowledge and reason up to scorn, and deprecates the work of the scholar. Logic is not always to its liking.

Public opinion suffers because of "conceptual chaos" among so many people. It is difficult for people generally to think conceptually. They prefer to think in concrete and specific terms, and hence they are lacking in the possession of any well-organized system of carefully defined concepts. Consequently they are easily victimized by fine-sounding but illogical arguments.

With a broader education for the masses of the people, and with a social science outlook for the majority of mankind, public opinion could greatly increase its strength as a social force. Its weakness lies partly in the lack by most people of a social science understanding.

Progress is being made toward a social science approach to public questions by people generally, but years will be required before even in a country such as the United States a social science understanding will direct the actions of public opinion. Time and patience and social science, however, may be expected to win.

i. A person can escape the wrath of public opinion by finding protection in an inner circle of friends, points out Professor Ross.² No matter what a person's offense may be, no matter how cruel he may be, no matter how vicious, he can find a few friends who will excuse, condone, understand, and give him refuge. Public opinion may release all its vials of wrath upon his head, but he can find asylum. Here he may actually be praised and perhaps justified. At least he can partially escape the punishment that public opinion would mete out to him. By keeping under cover, he can wait until the storm of public opinion has passed and then gradually and quietly return to at least a semblance of normal life.

j. In times of prosperity and peace public opinion is conservative. As long as everyone is doing well economically no one wants to disturb the status quo. Even if social dangers are evident, why upset the basket that is so well filled with choice fruit?

Deliberate change is not invited, for it would be also certain to stem the tide of prosperity rather than further it. During prosperity public opinion becomes aroused if someone attacks the prosperity-making forces. Promptly public opinion rushes to the rescue. It will listen to no change, and will browbeat any so-called disturbing elements. It becomes more conservative than ever.

Public opinion may become stagnant in a period of prosperity. People are lulled to sleep by the enjoyment of comforts. They become intoxicated on the wine of luxury. They become flabby in body, mind, and spirit. The person who would arouse them to a sense of impending danger is ignored, decried, or accused of being a meddler.

Under such conditions public opinion can be aroused only

² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

when it wants to be aroused. It is a mistake to think that all one has to do is to cry "wolf, wolf," and that public opinion will then stampede. It is not true that a sizable public opinion can be stimulated into action at any time on any subject. The development of public opinion depends on many underlying factors, such as an attack upon the mores, or the threat of danger from forces outside the given group. In fields where self-satisfaction is widespread and reigns supreme, public opinion is lethargic.

The startling statement has been made that "the public's interest in crime is not primarily in its suppression."³ What are the grounds for such a bold assertion? Why is it so difficult to stamp out prostitution, even in war times when venereal diseases take such a heavy toll in absenteeism and in manpower? Why does not public opinion crush with one gigantic effort the underworld of vice and crime that pollutes the city life of nearly every large metropolitan center? One answer is that crime pays the promoter. It pays large dividends if the public is worked properly. It finances subtle schemes of controlling public opinion and of hushing up those who would "squeal" on the offenders.

Why does public opinion allow bad housing conditions to continue in a wealthy country? Why did public opinion support slavery so long in so many countries? Certain antisocial ways, when approved by tradition, are hard to change, because tradition has the support of many of the "best people" in economic, social, religious life. The "best people" must not be offended, and so public opinion remains quiescent when it should cry out in repeated protests.

k. In times of group danger and excitement public opinion has been pronounced less reliable than the average opinions of individual citizens who depend on common sense. There is something about public opinion which makes it, when under strain, very subject to crowd psychology. It easily loses its head, and when it does, it displays no rhyme or reason. Public opinion is so closely tied up with the human feelings that it easily puts

³ Fred E. Haynes, *Independent*, April 4, 1925; quoted in W. Brooke Graves, *Readings in Public Opinion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1928), p. 1,087.

them in the saddle and they promptly run away with it. Fortunately, on occasions, as in a crowd, a few cooler heads may be allowed to take charge and to save the day at least on a common-sense basis.

This crowd psychology strangely contrasts with the immobility of public opinion in its deep-seated loyalty to traditional institutions, such as the state or religion. In these connections it cannot be easily budged; it stands adamant. Its usual mobility and excitability do not function here, except when these institutions are attacked. Then, public opinion comes to the rescue in a storm of emotional excitement. It does not tolerate tampering with the established order, for example, as found in religion, economic system, the political state. It slumbers only when these are considered safe.

l. Another weakness in public opinion is the existence of so many publics and so many public opinions. In the modern city a person can belong to so many different publics that he can hardly maintain a consistent point of view. There are so many public opinions in some fields of political activity that one scarcely knows which to believe.

The House of Representatives furnishes an example. Each dominant public in the United States is represented in the Congress by a "bloc" of considerable influence. When these blocs get in each other's way they hold up needed legislation. These conflicting blocs are merely representing the opposing types of public opinions and different interests which prevail in the nation.⁴

Every bloc is tempted to secure its desired legislation by giving support to other blocs in noncompeting fields in return for their votes. Publics thus cease to be free democratic forces and become trading agencies. They may not be a help, but a hindrance to democracy. They may cramp the style of democracy and defeat its true functioning.

m. Public opinion easily becomes a bedfellow with politics. Politicians know how to manipulate public opinion. When one group of politicians plays public opinion against another group, a part of the larger public is likely to swallow the propaganda

⁴ See Donald Wilhelm, "The Washington Soviets," *The Forum*, 74:743 ff.

of one group, and another part the propaganda of the opposition, and the rest of the public becomes confused or bored or disgusted. There may be enough skillful trickery to gain an election by one or another set of politicians over the best efforts of real statesmen-like candidates. The winning politician self-satisfiedly folds his arms and says in effect to his followers, as one writer suggests, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the votes," and calls his procedure democratic.

n. Public opinion is subject to "fifth columns." What is the meaning of the fifth column? An enemy may employ secret agents to lull a country to sleep, to play upon the peaceful feelings of a nation, to hold preparedness up to ridicule, and otherwise mold public opinion into supine attitudes, to the end that a country so misled may be overthrown.

Public opinion thus may be victimized by fifth columnists within a country. As long as public opinion is ill-grounded in the social sciences, is unduly subject to appeals to feelings, is based on intolerance and sinister purposes, and is lacking in intellectual balance wheels, it will continue to be at times subject to the fifth columnist.

No one of the aforementioned weaknesses of public opinion appears alone. As a rule, several weaknesses occur simultaneously or interwoven and as a result their deleterious effects are multiplied. As a result public opinion may fail to defend or build up those values which make a group functionally strong.

2. Lack of Personal Responsibility

A free public opinion has little chance where the people are motivated by hyperindividualism or where their wishes are stifled by a totalitarian regime. If people who believe in democracy are not allowed to exercise it, the public opinion that exists is unnatural. Public opinion cannot be genuine if physically forced, for force, strange to say, is fragile when imposed upon the will of the people.

The weaknesses of public opinion are in part the weaknesses of democracy. When the rank and file of persons are better educated in social science principles and learn to think with social wisdom, public opinion will come into its own and pave the way for a new era of democracy. With a real appreciation by

every man and woman of their democratic responsibility, the weaknesses of public opinion will be largely overcome. With personal opinions pointed toward the welfare of the whole, public opinion will not be hampered as now.

The question may be raised: What are the requirements that democracy makes of public opinion as a justifiable agency of social control? By social control is meant the ways and means of regulating the behavior of members of society so that given group goals may be achieved. In a democracy these goals refer to the greatest possible development of persons acting on their own responsibility. In order that this freedom may not lead individuals to destroy each other, a reasonable measure of social self-control is also necessary.

The larger the society and the more complex its life, the greater the necessity of a disciplined liberty. Thus, social control in a democracy calls for measures that will on one hand guarantee liberty to individuals, and that will on the other hand produce a universal self-developed discipline of the use of that liberty in the direction of total welfare. Social control in a democracy calls for a supporting public opinion (a) which will safeguard personal liberty, (b) which will set up and enforce disciplinary procedures, (c) which will measure all behavior in terms of society as a whole, and (d) which will provide for universally functioning discussion groups.⁵

An effective social control in a democracy works in two major directions. It guarantees to the individual the "four freedoms," or more, and at the same time it stimulates him to discipline himself in line with the total welfare. If he disciplines himself, he will accept such discipline less recalcitrantly than if it is imposed on him. Public opinion may act impersonally enough to insist upon the needed self-discipline without arousing undue antagonism to discipline. It may succeed in making evident the universal need for this discipline, without which there can be no liberty or democracy, only anarchy.

There are ways in which democratic governments have not yet trusted public opinion. One such is named in the statement: "No national public ever fought a war in which it voted to do so." The reason given for this limitation usually is that an in-

⁵ E. S. Bogardus, *Democracy by Discussion* (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942).

telligent vote by millions of people requires a period of discussion and of careful consideration, and that in the meantime a well prepared enemy might overrun a nation. When danger of attack by a powerful enemy is imminent, there is no time for a debate. Today when an enemy strikes he acts swiftly, with treachery and without warning.

3. *Lack of Social Science Backgrounds*

Until recently public opinion has relied little upon social science. The widespread public has not only been untrained in social science but has even been skeptical of it. Public opinion has been developed largely on the basis of feelings or sometimes of common sense.

Until a few years ago there had been little scientific study of the nature of public opinion. Data are not yet available whereby any principles of public opinion can be formulated, and hence there are few guiding ideas for persons to use who might become public opinion authorities for guiding its development scientifically.

Public opinion has carried on its powerful influence with no central vantage point, no general institutional backing, and little research backing. Only in 1937 was the Institute of Public Opinion Analysis organized to give research scrutiny to public opinion processes, but it ended its work in 1942 "for the duration." Only in 1935 was the *Public Opinion Quarterly* established, but it has done such specialized research work on public opinion that these studies have not yet had much effect on the formation and behavior of public opinion. As a result of the errors of the public opinion pollsters in the presidential campaign of 1948 in the United States the public is skeptical of anyone who claims to measure public opinion. The public is aware that it is being victimized by propagandists but does not know what to do about it. The public needs assistance in distinguishing between propaganda and truth. To achieve this goal, units of study might be included in all high-school curricula for the purpose of training boys and girls to recognize the earmarks of propaganda and to tell the difference between propaganda and truth.⁶ If all high-school students acquired

⁶ E. S. Bogardus, "Earmarks of Propaganda," *Sociology and Social Research*, 26:272-282.

even an elementary knowledge of how propaganda works they could at least insist on more open methods of propaganda. They could acquire some skill in recognizing the differences between publicity, advertising, indoctrination, dissemination, teaching, and education. In other words people need to do something to protect themselves against the abuse of public opinion.

The formation of public opinion needs protective legislation. If it is important to protect the food of a nation and to safeguard children and adults against greedy individuals who for economic gain will adulterate food, how much more important is it to protect children and adults against greedy individuals who also for economic gain will sell adulterated and poisonous ideas via propaganda methods? If pure food legislation is necessary, how much more needed is legislation against unsound propaganda?

The general public cannot have too much help in its struggle to get correct information on all vital themes. Secondary schools can train youth to recognize all the gross propaganda techniques. Adults can form discussion groups for informing themselves accurately on public questions. Reliable data can be made popular.

There is still another difficulty that has to be faced. The world is getting so complicated and there are so many phases of business and politics and government and religion and morals and family life and so on and on that come before the attention of nearly everyone daily that no one can comprehend it all. The whole environment is getting too big, particularly the invisible social environment, for the mind to grasp.⁷ Everyone must take this factor into consideration every time that he expresses an opinion.

The analyses that have been made thus far in this chapter indicate that public opinion acts quickly and inexpensively on a multitude of social happenings. It is always at work, but with varying degrees of success, as an agency of social control. It takes many unimportant matters with great seriousness, and overlooks many vital problems entirely, especially if they are connected with established and generally accepted mores. Without its support, laws and morals become ineffective, and morale is broken

⁷ See Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922), p. 314.

down. However, it allows propaganda to undermine its strong points. To make public opinion a more efficient agency of control, people need to be grounded in their thinking in social science data, to rely continually on research studies, and to develop regular discussion group procedures.

4. *Language and Thought Difficulties*

The formation of public opinion suffers from semantic difficulties. Discussion after discussion often defeats itself because people use words in different senses. Since everyone interprets what is said in terms of his own experiences and since everyone's experiences are more or less distinctive and unique, different meanings easily play hob with opinion-formation. Precision in the use of words and clear explanations regarding intended meanings are continually necessary if discussion is not to run amuck.

Failure to think in semantically clear terms is often accompanied by another weakness in the thinking process, namely, the universal human tendency unduly to simplify reality. The human mind simplifies in order to understand. It presents reality in terms of figures of speech and analogies but these often disclose only the surface faces of reality. It gives only a few aspects of what may be a complex situation as if they were the whole story.

Truth in its full meaning is too deep for the average mind. It is only the more elemental aspects of truth that are usually conveyed from mind to mind. Most opinions, therefore, are made out of bits of truth, the simpler, more palatable bits.⁸

Simplification may take the form of personification, that is, of thinking in terms of persons. Abstract truth that goes over the head of many people is comprehensible if put in human clothes. The tendency to give reality the attractive garb of personality is widespread, because most people "catch on" that way better than in any other way. But the process of personification undoubtedly leaves a large part of reality untouched. Decisions are made and opinions become common on the ground of part truths, analogies, and distortions. People unduly think in per-

⁸ See William Albigh, *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1938), Chapter IV, for a more extended statement of four significant thought processes.

sonalities instead of maintaining objectivity in their thought life.

Reification is another expression of simplification. Reification translates theory into things because people can think more easily about the tangible than about the intangible. But the translation leaves the essence of many truths inadequately expressed.⁹

Another thought process characteristic of opinion-making is rationalization, in the sense that people try to justify their behavior or explain why they have not lived up to their ideals. Rationalization in this sense is setting up a substitute for the ideal, and an alibi for failure to achieve the best, instead of admitting failure, of studying it, and of putting its lessons into new, forward-looking thinking.

Another thought habit which hinders sound opinion-making is the tendency to respond to the "illusion of universality." Headlines commonly give exaggerated impressions. The average person accepts this exaggeration or distortion either because he does not think or because it is his nature to generalize easily.

This thought habit affects the talker and the listener equally. The talker likes to tell a good story and to add to the glory or the horror of the event. The listener likes to listen to a dramatic occurrence rather than to a tame one. Moreover, people easily accept the dramatic as the universal.

Another common weakness in forming opinions is "to accept the familiar and believe the expected."¹⁰ It is a traditional belief among white people, suggests Graham R. Taylor, that Negroes "are unduly inclined to crime." So race-baiters, knowing this traditional belief, play it up and confirm it more definitely than ever.

Likewise people easily "fall for" the desired. They do not need to be convinced regarding what they desire to see happen. A single fact or a thin thread of evidence is enough to set off this behavior mechanism. Bidders for public opinion naturally become skillful in appealing to this mental habit.

⁹ J. W. Woodward, *Reification and Supernaturalism as Factors in Social Rigidity and Social Change* (Hanover, New Hampshire: The Sociological Press, 1935).

¹⁰ G. R. Taylor, *National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1923), p. 494.

People generally like to "hold a firm opinion."¹¹ They take pride in not changing their beliefs and they falsely assume that to change or to admit that they have been in error is to admit weakness of character.

The making of opinion is handicapped on all sides by the limitations of symbolism, by the frailties of human nature, by the shortcomings of popular education, and by the lack of care in thinking precisely. Sound opinion-making is hampered by too few opportunities for people to participate regularly in democratic discussion groups.

¹¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, *Teachers' College Record* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), 24:419.

CHAPTER XI

Propaganda Distortions

IN CONVERSATIONS, newspapers, motion pictures, radio programs a great deal of propaganda enters to influence opinion-formation. One could almost say that propaganda has become an institution of great importance in itself. It has become so nearly omnipresent in social life and its techniques have become so many, so subtle, and so diversified that a complete analysis in a limited space is impossible.

1. What is Propaganda?

Propaganda is becoming so prevalent that people are growing increasingly doubtful about what to believe and what not to believe. Propaganda is becoming so subtle that the average person does not recognize it until after he has been hoodwinked, and perhaps not even then. Propaganda has so many techniques of influencing people that no single-sentence definition covers the process.

In democratic countries, special-interest groups make use of freedom to develop skillful techniques for getting people to believe what is to the advantage of these groups, even though such beliefs sometimes lead the general public to work against its own development. In totalitarian states, the dictators develop powerful ministries of propaganda that control the press, the motion pictures, the radio, the schools. These agencies are supported by national controls that prevent the people from hearing or learning about those happenings which the government decides the people should not know.

What is propaganda? The term is used in many senses. Some years ago Frederick E. Lumley isolated about thirty different meanings of the term. These vary from a two-worded definition such as "planned suggestion" to involved descriptions that include a number of different aspects of propaganda such as (a)

its origins, (b) the interests concerned, (c) the methods employed, (d) the content that is disseminated, and (e) the results that accrue.¹

Historically, propaganda began as methods of propagating and spreading ideas. In 1622, Pope Gregory XV set up an organization "for the propagation of the faith." Hence propaganda began as a setting forth of ideas in a favorable light regarding some phase of life. It was one-sided, but earnest and honest. To propagate or raise plants is one thing, but to propagate ideas is quite different. It is a much more complicated process, involving the freedom of human beings, even of children to think for themselves.

For the purpose of this discussion, propaganda today may be defined as a one-sided presentation of an idea or a program signifying that it is major truth. It is a part of the truth presented as the whole truth, and here is where deception enters as an integral part of a great deal of propaganda.

Propaganda ranges from the unintentional to the highly intentional.² It may spring from such an earnest belief in a given cause that it sees only favorable arguments. Or if it is aware of unfavorable aspects, it honestly views them as not worth mentioning. However, propaganda may represent any of the intermediate degrees between honest misrepresentation and deliberate falsification of the facts. The defense of particular interests, of greedy aims, of an undue exercise of power may lead some groups to go to extremes and even to diabolical lengths in destructive propaganda efforts. The motivation may run the gamut from honesty and sincerity to hidden machinations. It is quite possible that unintentional propaganda may exceed the intentional varieties.

Propaganda, as defined here, often springs from scheming and the use of deception. People identify themselves with special interests and then work for these interests at all costs. Propaganda sometimes employs science to twist figures in support of its own wishful thinking.

Propaganda carries with it the implicit idea that it has done

¹ Frederick E. Lumley, *The Propaganda Menace* (New York: The Century Company, 1934), p. 44.

² Lawrence W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1948), pp. 245 ff.

all the thinking that is necessary. It has been charged with choosing the facts that the propagandist wants his subjects to hear, as distinguished from education which presents "all the facts." It believes that its subjects have nothing to do but to accept these conclusions. Propaganda calls for the closed mind on the part of its listeners or readers. It invites no thinking except the acceptance of conclusions that have already been formulated by its exponents.

Propaganda may also be contrasted with education as is done in the following statement by an anonymous writer: "Education invites questions; propaganda has answers. Education welcomes differences in viewpoint. Education welcomes all pertinent facts; propaganda selects only those that point to the pre-determined conclusions. Education takes place in small-group feeling; propaganda, in mass feeling."

2. *Propaganda Devices*

The devices of propaganda range from the recognizable to the unrecognizable. It is an exceedingly practical person who asks, How can I recognize propaganda in order that I may not be victimized by it? In certain cases the answer is easy, but in others it is difficult, even for the careful student of public opinion. A number of analyses of propaganda have been made in recent years. Two of these will be mentioned at this point as an approach to the classification which follows. The best-known discussion of methods is that made by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis.³ The devices used by propagandists as given by the Institute are seven.

- a. Name calling, or applying opprobrious names in order to discredit persons and ideas.
- b. The use of glittering generalities. The method is that of giving wholesale praise on the assumption that the listener will not distinguish between the good and bad, and will swallow the good about somebody or something without considering the

³ Established at Yale University in 1937 as a "non-profit corporation for scientific research in methods used by propagandists in influencing public opinion." Although discontinued "for the duration" in 1942, it was not resumed. One of the reasons given for the discontinuation is of significance, namely, that during the war it might not be feasible to analyze propaganda.

bad. When a virtuous concept is used, such as mother, there is prompt acceptance of the person to whom the term is applied.

c. Testimonials. Important people are used to commend something highly with the result that the praised object is accepted without question. A favorite device is to get a recognized authority to approve something in a field in which he knows little. The average person does not realize that an authority in one field may be quite incompetent in another.

d. The transfer device. A person is said to be a friend of Governor So-and-So, and it is assumed that the public will transfer some of the prestige of the governor to the hitherto unknown "friend."

e. The plain folks device. Here the method is to identify a person, such as a candidate for office, as one of the common people, as hobnobbing freely with ordinary people, as putting on overalls and an old straw hat and pitching hay. In this way the public composed of common people will be led to vote for "one of their very own."

f. Card stacking. Only the good points are released, and the public seeing only one side of the picture accepts it.

g. Bandwagon technique. The impression is given out in a political campaign that "our side" is going to win by 100,000 votes, even though there is no real indication of such results. The scheme is to induce the undecided voters and the many who want to be on the winning side to decide at once for the "obvious" (sic) victors.⁴

A second classification of propaganda devices that may be noted is the one by Doob.⁵ He enters into the social psychological aspects of propaganda and gives considerable insight into the processes involved in the techniques. Doob's presentation of procedures may be condensed in the following manner.

⁴ New Haven, Connecticut: Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 1939, 1:5-7.

⁵ Lawrence W. Doob, *Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp. 413 ff.

a. Making the stimulus situation stand out by repetition and simplification. The changes are rung on a slogan.

b. Making delayed and concealed suggestions. Sometimes the propagandist reveals his purposes, especially if he thinks he has a cause. Sometimes it seems wiser to delay the release of the aims until the propaganda has developed a following. In other cases the aims are kept concealed.

Some writers make concealment an essential phase of propaganda. They define propaganda as a form of influencing people in which the propagandist does not disclose his identity. This distinction is permissible, but omits those factors in exerting influence which otherwise have all the characteristics of propaganda.

c. Arousing related interests. By developing a popular interest in personal freedom it is possible to obtain favorable reactions to propaganda for a war for economic aggrandizement.

d. Securing a desired integration of predisposing attitudes. This point involves the well-known "build-up" technique. It refers to arousing what are already predisposing attitudes in people.

e. Arousing an auxiliary submissive attitude toward the stimulus situation. In this case the attempt is to restrict the mental field to the desired attitudes, which though weak are easily aroused when there are no competing attitudes.

f. Using negative suggestion in the form of counter-propaganda. This procedure involves undermining the position of the opposition.

g. Using persuasion. When persuasion is directed to large numbers of people, it may be identified in its results with propaganda.⁶

The propagandist often uses myths and legends. A *myth* is a part-truth that becomes greatly exaggerated and acquires a

⁶ For an elaboration of these points, see Doob, *loc. cit.*

spiritual sanction while a legend develops a secular halo. An ordinary person may be accorded a halo by friends and his total behavior may be deified.

An unworthy cause may acquire favorable opinions because of the myths that are built up around its leaders. The technique known as "build-up" has placed many persons in high office, and questionable causes have thereby thrived. Cults and sects have been promulgated in this manner. The halo is not challenged, and followers multiply—at least for a time.

After a leader's death his followers may boost him into virtual sainthood, and his institutional connections may as a result enjoy a favorable name for generations. But sooner or later a historian will dig into the past and turn up records of worldly deeds and of baldly human conduct, and the hero is dimmed and his fame beclouded, much to the dismay of his followers.

Because of its religious support the myth becomes a powerful tool in opinion-making. Unfortunately it may be utilized by the unscrupulous as well as by honest people. Its greatest offence against sound public opinion is that it presents "truth and error, fact and fable, report and fantasy . . . all on the same plane of credulity." It never contains the critical power to separate its truths from its errors.⁷

Closely related to the myth as a tool of making public opinion is the *legend*. It makes heroes out of ordinary men and women without religious aid or encouragement. With the assistance of modern "build-up" techniques, greedy elements in society may make one of their number into a leader because of some minor deed of his, and thereby win the support of public opinion for themselves.

Albig points out that the Calvin Coolidge legend was "constructed very rapidly in the months succeeding his elevation to the presidency."⁸ The legend developed the stereotype of "a silent, unintellectual, honest, cautious, shrewd, average man."⁹ He was pictured as possessing "sphinx-like wisdom," and yet only a short time before, he "had been considered by many of

⁷ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), p. 123.

⁸ William Albig, *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), p. 131.

⁹ *Ibid.*

his own party as too weak" to be considered for the vice-presidential nomination.¹⁰ In fairness to Coolidge, however, Albig points out that he never pretended to have all the qualities which his legend ascribed to him.

Today legends and myths have been relegated to a back seat in the lives of carefully thinking people. Yet they are still influential enough so that they are actually created and deliberately spread in every major political campaign. They are by no means tools of a past age, for they are being manufactured in wholesale lots even today.

The propagandist also makes extensive use of shibboleths and slogans. The term *shibboleth* has come to mean both a password and a watchword, and more, an identification of a person with a program, procedure, or cause.¹¹ It distinguishes "our crowd" from other people; it separates the acceptable from the unacceptable, and favorable from unfavorable opinion.

The shibboleth as a watchword and party-cry sways votes. Its main idea becomes accepted as a stereotype for a party's announced program and covers up the unannounced schemes. It is catchy and appealing to sentiment. It satisfies unsatisfied longings and thereby gains momentum. The promoters are careful to see that the shibboleth fits in neatly with the beliefs and sentiments of the people whose support and votes are desired. "The full dinner-pail" won many votes for William McKinley in the presidential campaign of 1896, and "Back to normalcy," for Warren G. Harding in 1920. In the first instance, the country had been struggling with the depression of 1893, and the full dinner pail appealed to the laboring men. In the second case, the disturbances of World War I were still uppermost and many people wanted to get back to "normal times."

The term *slogan* comes from the Gaelic *slaugh-ghairm*, which means a war call (*slaugh*, army and *ghairm*, a cry). Originally a slogan was a call to arms at the appearance of danger. The war cry of a startled Scottish clan in the Highlands centuries ago has become today any rallying cry.

The creating of public opinion may begin by formulating calls or slogans. The definition of a slogan as "any brief, popu-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The original account of the first use of shibboleths is found in *Judges* 12:1-6.

larly received, and reiterated challenge to immediate participation in competitive or conflicting social interaction" ¹² indicates its direct relation to public opinion. It makes an appeal to action as did Nelson's "England expects every man to do his duty," which also suggests a program. "Make the world safe for democracy" likewise illustrates the dual function of an appeal and a program.¹³

The fields in which slogans thrive testify to their omniactive character. Originating in (a) war operations, slogans stand out oftentimes in (b) political campaigns, in (c) the business world of advertising, in (d) religious promotion work, e.g., "The evangelization of the world in this generation," in (e) athletics, when "big games" are being played and "rallies" by college students are being staged, and in (f) welfare work, particularly in community chest campaigns.¹⁴

Lumley has gone further and analyzed some of the characteristics of an effective slogan.¹⁵ These vary considerably, but a few will be summarized here. (a) Rhythm is illustrated by "Proven by the test of time." (b) Alliteration is found in "Foods of the finest flavor." (c) Repetition of sounds is long-standing as in the adage, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." (d) Brevity is everywhere evident in slogans. (e) Affirmation is present in slogans. Additional traits are punning, appeals to curiosity, appeals to sentiments, appeals to loyalty to home and country.

The propagandist occasionally uses ballyhoo effectively. The term comes from a village in County Cork, Ireland. The village in question is Ballyhooly in which the practice once developed of making a noisy demonstration in order to attract attention. It is quite probable that noisy demonstrations as vote-gainers are by no means limited to Ballyhooly, but this village became well-known for its alleged role in giving the term ballyhoo to the world.

It is evident that noisy demonstrations are resorted to as attention-gainers. Noise arrests the attention of people and creates crowds. It draws people together. It is a device for creating

¹² F. E. Lumley, *Means of Social Control* (New York: The Century Company, 1925), p. 161.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁴ Adapted from Lumley, *ibid.*, pp. 162-168.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-176.

a crowd as a basis for "putting over" some scheme. It is an elemental sort of technique which fools no thoughtful person.

Once people have come together, a spellbinder or loud talker attempts to convince people and to win support. He resorts to "oratory" in order to keep those together who have been brought together by ballyhoo. He keeps up a semblance of the original noisy demonstration or ballyhoo, while deftly mixing catchy phrases and slogans and otherwise trying to transform the crowd into followers. Ballyhoo includes "the antics, stunts, tricks, and devices by which individuals and corporations often seem to obtain good will without actually trying to remove the causes of ill will." ¹⁶

Public opinion based on ballyhoo by one party is subject to still greater ballyhoo from the opposition. The clientele of ballyhoo are those individuals who are swayed by blatancy. Noise gives the impression of numbers, and ballyhoo leads the thoughtless to assume that there is widespread support. Ballyhoo misleads, but it cannot mislead everyone, and it cannot mislead for long.

A few persons may gain the upper hand for a time by the use of ballyhoo, but sooner or later, "the quiet majority" make themselves felt. When the latter begin to stir, the bubble of ballyhoo is pricked and disappears. Ballyhoo is admitted by its own promoters as being a cheap sort of falderol.

The demagogue fits well into the picture at this point. He is a past-master in appealing to the feelings of people. He uses ballyhoo to perfection. He appeals "to long cherished traditions." ¹⁷ He arouses the fear that something valuable is about to be lost. As a rule, he sways the public in the direction of the past. He uses the emotions to buttress the old.

3. *Earmarks of Propaganda*

a. *Unguarded enthusiasm* leads to the unintentional type of propaganda. The person who is wholly enthusiastic in behalf of an idea or a project is likely to be blind to some of its weaknesses, and to be so desirous of having it accepted that he

¹⁶ Harwood L. Childs, *An Introduction to Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1940), p. 1.

¹⁷ Edward Mims, *The Advancing South* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1926), p. 20.

unintentionally gives a one-sided presentation of it as though it were the whole truth.

The enthusiastic advocate is likely to use superlatives with frequency. Enthusiasm is not to be condemned but to be used discriminately. Superlatives are useful terms provided they are applied correctly after an objective examination and real comparisons have been made.

b. *Sentiment* easily identifies itself with one aspect or another of life and leads its proponent into propagandist ways. Love has been accused often of being blind, that is, of being a blind advocate or exponent. It overlooks weaknesses, and excuses known faults. It thinks and acts one-sidedly, and thus plays the role, perhaps unintentionally, of a propagandist.

In fields such as politics, propaganda uses what has been called "folksy" terms. It makes appeals in terms of "mother, home, and heaven." It identifies its heroes with the often-forgotten common man. This is a case in which propaganda makes use of sentiment through the "plain folks" device.

c. *An intolerant air or tone* is usually evidence of propaganda. The bold and brutal antagonist is almost always a propagandist. He knows what he does not like, and woe to anyone who disagrees.

If you do not accept the dictates of an intolerant propagandist, you are made to feel that you are hardly a moron. Your status goes down, away down. Not only is intolerance one-sided, but it recognizes no other side that is worth mentioning, and hence fosters propaganda. It inevitably invokes "name-calling."

d. The use of *generalities applied to particulars* is propaganda. It includes the "glittering generalities" technique. The particularistic view is presented as though it were the whole picture. The phrase, "everybody is doing it," does not mean what it says. As a rule it signifies that a minority have adopted some line of behavior and that someone is falsely claiming universality for it. The claim of universality gives the impression that all the arguments are on one side.

A difficulty with the generalities type of propaganda is that it cannot be pinned down anywhere. Its basic claims are elusive.

"Everybody" may not include anyone of whom you have ever heard. It may refer to no well-known persons, but merely to a few unheard-of individuals.

e. *Wholesale condemnation* is an evidence of propaganda. To condemn entirely indicates that one has viewed a situation one-sidedly. No condemned group is so bad that there is nothing to be said for its side of the case. It was Edmund Burke who asserted: "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against an whole people" (Speech on Conciliation with America, March 22, 1775).

Every crime has some extenuating circumstances if you can believe any of the arguments of criminal lawyers in behalf of their clients. Wholesale condemnation is an absolutist position which is hard to support in a world of changing personalities who are subjected to a limitless variety of bombarding stimuli. Wholesale condemnation indicates that feelings are in complete charge of reason, and it uses name-calling on its lowest levels.

f. The use of *pressure* is an evidence of propaganda. Pressure is condensed group opinion. It is the condensed opinion of a strong and determined group of people who by-pass legislators and make their demands upon the administrator of laws. The assumption is that the administrator always has leeway, that he can administer a law rigidly or leniently, that he can make exceptions. Moreover, the pressure group assumes that if enough exceptions are made the original law or order will be broken down, and a new rule will be established.

The pressure group does not take no for an answer. It returns again and again. It obstructs activities until it gets its way. It persists until it makes itself obnoxious. One of its methods is to obtain affirmative action on its requests even if such a result comes from the desire of an executive to get rid of the pressure group. This technique is undemocratic. The name, pressure group, implies domineering attitudes, which in turn, connote dictatorship.

The pressure group often acts counter to public opinion. It may seek to obtain its own aims in spite of public opinion. It flaunts public judgment, and defies consensus. The pressure group works with conviction, zeal, and a sense of being right.

It demands, intimidates, and it uses threats. It holds up regular activities and calls sit-down strikes. It seeks revolutionary action. A pressure group's aims may have merit even though the methods are undemocratic. When established authority is unwieldy, harsh, unresponsive, and vested interests call out the militia to maintain themselves in power, then pressure groups offer the defense that there is no other way open to them. The members of such a group state that their methods are no worse than those used by the power-holders. They admit that their procedures are undemocratic but insist that democratic procedures had already broken down before they began to use pressure. They may claim that if a democratic public opinion were really functioning, they would not have become a pressure group. To the extent that public opinion is functioning democratically, pressure groups have no excuse for existing. The best antidote for pressure group activity is to keep open the avenues for the free expression of public opinion.

The ways of propaganda have become increasingly devious because of the rise of pressure groups. Sometimes the latter have large sums of money at their disposal. When moved by an overwhelming greed or by a sense of having been treated unjustly, they will go to great lengths in their exercise of pressure. When propaganda is promoted by high pressure, by a group that has a million dollars at its disposal, by unscrupulous greed, by the ablest legal talent, by the use of violence and hatred, then it becomes indescribably dangerous to the free formation of public opinion.

g. A *reputable mouthpiece* is often secured to make disreputable statements. The fact that Senator ———— makes an assertion, especially if he belongs to one's own political party, or to one's school of economic thought, is a factor adequate to secure acceptance of what may turn out to be a piece of forgery. Not that the Senator is deliberately guilty, for he may have been misled by his desire to repay an obligation, or he may have been too busy to investigate the value of what he is endorsing, or he may have been seeking a cheap method of widespread publicity. This testimonial method used by propagandists overlooks the fact, already referred to, that an authority in one speciality is not *ipso facto* an authority in other fields.

h. *Insinuation*, especially if it suggests behavior that reflects adversely on the character of someone or throws discredit on something, is hard to overcome. Insinuation is a sly form of propaganda, for it seems to say more than it actually does. It implies what is not wholly true. Moreover it becomes exaggerated in the telling and repeating.

Insinuation calls attention to a harmless fact in such a way that it puts over a vicious point. The report, "I saw Mr. X out walking with a young lady Sunday afternoon (Mr. X is a married man)," illustrates how this type of propaganda works. There may be no harm in this event as such, but it is told in such a way as to suggest the damaging thought that Mr. X is deserting his wife for another woman.

Said a lawyer to a jury, pointing to the opposing counsel, "What, that little shrimp, I could put him in my pocket." The aim is to belittle the opponent's argument. But when his turn came, the diminutive defense lawyer retorted: "If the prosecuting attorney put me in his pocket, he would have more brains in his pocket than he has in his head." Thus one insinuation may be met by an equally good, if not a better, one. Belittling propaganda may meet belittling propaganda of equal if not greater force, and the tables be turned against the initiator of insinuation.

i. Another evidence of propaganda is found in the *concealment of sources*. An appeal to the public may be signed: "A Committee for the Protection of Children." No names of the Committee are given. They cannot be learned easily, but when ferreted out they prove to be unknown hirelings of a special interest which is trying to reap a financial harvest, instead of public-spirited, widely known exponents of humane behavior.

Journalistic ethics now require that when special appeals for business or for votes are made in the news columns, they must bear the label, "paid advertisement," in order that the public may know that the proposal has particular sponsors. Here a difference between propaganda and advertising comes to the surface, namely, advertising is signed whereas propaganda often appears incognito.

j. *Presenting both sides of an argument from one side* is a not easily recognizable form of propaganda. A public speaker whom

the writer has known always began an address by presenting the arguments on the side of a question which he did not accept. You could tell what his conclusion would be as soon as he began, for he followed the same pattern in every important address. The method is deceptive but intentionally so. It gives the impression that the speaker is exceedingly fair, and that he is considering both sides of a question. The catch is that he is looking at both sides from one side only. His presentation of the side in which he does not believe is not so full and fair as of the side that he advocates. He knows before he begins his study of a question what his conclusion will be, and he builds his argument in the light of that conclusion. He does not investigate the question from a wholly impartial viewpoint and with no conclusions in mind. He is not wholly objective. He does not present the pros and cons from an objective viewpoint, but from a partially concealed approach.

k. *Artistic inconsistency* is another evidence of propaganda. How many times has a picture of a beautiful girl been utilized in the service of some cause which makes no contribution to beauty. The use of gorgeous-appearing flowers is a common resort of agencies which aim to make no contributions to nature's embellishments. The theory is that beautiful works of art create a delightful atmosphere which charms the observer, and that the charmed observer will transform a part of his pleasure into a favorable reaction toward the cause or agency or products which are using a beautiful but incongruous setting.

l. The *non-sequitur argument* is a bold attempt on an intellectual level to put over a program on an unsuspecting public. Often positiveness is used to cover up the hidden fallacy. In the presidential campaign of 1940 in the United States, Mr. Willkie was accused of being too dynamic, whereas the presidency calls for a judicial mind. The statement obscures the fact that the presidency calls not for a judge but an executive and a doer. In the same campaign President Roosevelt was charged with favoring communism because he did not interfere in putting an end to a particular labor strike.

m. The *doctoring of facts* is a well-known device of the propagandist. The technique is exceedingly difficult to recognize be-

cause the facts are changed in such a way that the change is not recognizable to anyone who is not an expert in the given field. The coloration of news by the press is sometimes done with such a delicate hand that the uninitiated cannot detect the transformation.

No one can be well informed in more than a few special fields, and hence is subject to being misled by doctored facts in all other fields. In a democracy, the truth will come out later if not earlier, but perhaps not until irreparable damage has been done by unscrupulous propagandists.

n. The most vicious piece of propaganda is that in which *the opposition is led to assume a compromising position*. A worthy candidate for office is induced to befriend a helpless woman, who turns out to be a disreputable person in whose company the candidate is caught. The mere reporting of such an incident is damaging, and a slight insinuation makes the effects of it more than doubly difficult to overcome.

In war a belligerent can liquidate one of its own citizens, and inaugurate propagandist movement against the enemy for having committed this crime and hence for its alleged wanton violation of international law. This practice of deliberately creating incidents of untoward nature is pursued all too often by a government wishing to whip up its lethargic citizens to a fighting fury.

The foregoing exhibit of simple and complex evidence of propaganda does not exhaust the list by any means, but it at least is indicative. Moreover, the propagandist rarely uses one of these methods by itself. He usually utilizes two or three or more techniques, and consequently makes his propaganda doubly or trebly effective. For the same reason the study of propaganda becomes baffling.

4. *Wartime Propaganda*

In World War I an established pattern of propaganda was developed. Its basic lines were the same for both the Allies and for Germany. It arose out of previous experience and the skill of national propagandists.

In World War II, the Nazis perfected wartime propaganda to a higher degree than had been done up to that time anywhere.

In thoroughgoing ways the Nazis developed and perfected every practicable psychological means of warfare. As early as 1937 Hitler established a full-fledged psychological department in the Nazi army. The psychologists developed fear-photography based on Nazi might, proclaiming Nazi defeats and then a major Nazi victory, anti-Semitic campaigns, typing the new super-German race, and the constant manipulation of public opinion through daily control and use of newspapers, radio, and motion pictures.¹⁸

A reference in a preceding chapter to the relation of morale to propaganda in war may now be explained.¹⁹

a. The first aim is to build up and maintain morale at home. Victories are "played up" and defeats are "played down." Killing the enemy is lauded, even when the latter is ambushed. Killing by the "enemy" is deplored and resort to ambush by the enemy is denounced as downright treachery. The virtues of the given nation are repeatedly extolled, while the behavior of the enemy is pictured in the worst light possible.

b. The second aim is to tear down the enemy's morale. Broadcasts by radio and leaflets spread from the skies are used to tell the people in the enemy country what may be gained by seeking peace and what dire results will take place if they persist in fighting. The enemy's people are repeatedly told of the strength of their opponents. In these ways attempts are made to weaken the enemy's morale.

c. The third aim is to win over neutrals. Promises are made. Food ships are sent and other good deeds are done. The neutral is shown how misfortune will beset him if he joins the enemy, and how good fortune will be his if he becomes an ally. The weaknesses of the enemy and the strengths of one's own country are exaggerated.

The neutral is likely to prove a strategic element in war. He receives propaganda from two major directions. Not being an enemy of either combatant, the neutral's territory is flooded

¹⁸ Wayland F. Vaughan, *Social Psychology* (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1948), pp. 333 ff.

¹⁹ M. H. Newmeyer, "Radio in Wartime," *Sociology and Social Research*, 27:95, 96.

with two sets of propaganda. It is difficult for neutral people to decide where the truth lies, and even their leaders may be deceived.

Propaganda in wartime always has an outstanding ace card. War is necessary as a defense measure, hence, anything that war requires as a means of defending one's nation is justified. The public tends to accept both war and propaganda in the name of its own defense.²⁰

5. Control of Propaganda

The present situation regarding propaganda constitutes a far-reaching social problem. People are becoming so aware that propaganda is omnioperative that large numbers are growing skeptical of everything that they read or hear. Some are like the woman who says that when she discovers that anything is propaganda she drops it promptly into the wastebasket.²¹ She regards propaganda as poison. However, she might do better than to drop it in the wastebasket. She might analyze it and expose it, and thus protect other people as well as herself.

A college student says: "I can't believe anything any more. Propaganda is so subtle today that I cannot recognize it." An older person reports: "People are so gullible that a clever propagandist can put almost anything over on them." From gullibility to cynicism is a long jump. The sins of the propagandist evidently are many. "Inevitably the propagandist tends to become a liar."²²

Neither of the aforementioned persons is to be considered as an acceptable example. The younger of the two persons has failed to tackle the problem of propaganda's subtleties, analyze them, and help people to determine what is true and what is false. The older person has generalized too quickly. Perhaps the gullible people are chiefly those who want to be fooled, or those who have not yet learned to recognize the tricks of the propagandist, but certainly not everybody all the time.

What are the effects of constantly being on the outlook for

²⁰ See Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), Vol. II, Ch. XXX.

²¹ As reported by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (New Haven, Connecticut, June, 1941).

²² Albig, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

evidences of propaganda? Some people will grow more cynical. Their feelings of helplessness will increase. Or they will be so definitely on the outlook for propaganda that they will be continually suspicious.

If the search for the negative and destructive becomes an end in itself, it leads to personality distortion. The effects of such a search upon personality are described at length by Bruce L. Smith,²³ who points out the cynicism-producing effects of propaganda, and who shows how some people are even losing faith in discussion because of the omnipresence of propaganda. An eagle eye for the earmarks of propaganda may lead to the conclusion that all is wrong with the world.

An antidote for the wholesale cynicism that is produced by propaganda is found by Smith in conducting discussion groups in terms of a science of democracy. By such a science, he means knowledge obtained by objective, social science methods, and expressed with full freedom of speech, with no strings attached, and with no ulterior motives being involved.²⁴

Another safeguard is at hand, namely, keeping the search for truth uppermost. If the lookout for propaganda is kept subservient to the larger whole of truth-seeking, the deleterious effects on both personality and on public opinion may be prevented.

Propaganda is commonly judged to be good or bad, depending on whose interest it favors. If it fosters your advancement, you are likely to call it good; but if it undermines or destroys your welfare, it is considered bad. A scientific approach would question the value of all propaganda according to the degree of its one-sidedness. Even a slightly one-sided presentation of a worthwhile cause may be questioned if such a presentation keeps a more valuable cause from getting a fair hearing. To call propaganda good if it works to the advantage of the general welfare, and bad if it undermines the welfare of all is also questionable.²⁵ Such an attitude involves the dubious principle that the end justifies the means. Perhaps all propaganda is bad

²³ Bruce L. Smith, "Propaganda Analysis and the Science of Democracy," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 5:250-259.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

²⁵ Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

if it is defined as a one-sided statement which implies that it represents the whole truth.

Instead of calling propaganda good or bad, it might be more enlightening to refer to it in degrees of an all-sided, objective presentation of a procedure. To do this accurately would require better tools of measurement than are now available. However, it can be done with approximate precision and at the same time in a way that the ordinary person can grasp. When all the pros and the cons of a proposal are given with a fairly complete objectivity against a background of social change, then propaganda approaches the zero mark.

The fact that propaganda campaigns today are expensive and employ an able and shrewd staff means that special interests have a tremendous advantage over the common man. The latter, though his number be legion, is almost helpless in the face of large-scale propaganda bought by and "put over" by large sums of money. Only in some kind of co-operative action and training can people as individuals protect themselves and society.

The concept of "propaganda saturation" occurs to the writer after considering Harwood L. Childs' term, propaganda density.²⁶ Despite all the skill of the propagandists, there comes a time in both democratic and totalitarian countries when propaganda reaches the limit of effectiveness. The saturation point varies in different areas, in different situations, and with different persons. There are many variations to be considered. Among unthinking, feeling-controlled people the saturation point is much higher than among people accustomed to do a great deal of their own thinking. In wartime it is usually higher than in peace time. In totalitarian countries it is much greater than in democratic states. Propaganda cannot go beyond facts too far or for too long a period of time. Human credulity has its limits. Lincoln's observation holds good here, namely, you cannot fool all the people all the time.

Childs asserts that the propaganda density of the United States "is the greatest of any country in the world."²⁷ Whether or not Childs is correct it appears that the propaganda density of the United States is high and that the question logically follows:

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Why is this propaganda density so great? Many factors are involved, such as the dynamic nature of the people, the drive for individual success, the tremendous activity of pressure groups of all kinds, and a marked degree of competition.

Propaganda density has been defined as "the ratio of the volume of propaganda to size of population," or "the quantity of ideas projected by means of various symbols divided by the census figures for population."²⁸ It would be significant if a convenient procedure could be developed for measuring propaganda density at a given time and place. It would be still more important if the relation of the propaganda density to the propaganda saturation point under specific conditions could be estimated with a fair degree of reliability.

In order to be on their guard adequately against propaganda people need to be well informed on social and economic and other important issues through discussion groups. They need to be trained in recognizing the earmarks of propaganda. Insight into the propaganda process is everywhere needed.²⁹ Every high school student needs to be equipped with "a knowledge of the most frequently used propaganda devices," with an alertness, an intelligence, and a critical ability to detect propaganda. Basically, it is important that youth be trained to cultivate a great variety of social relationships, to build a sincere regard for the public weal, and to develop "open-mindedness and critical-mindedness."³⁰ Democratic processes are excellent safeguards against propaganda. If it is true that in totalitarian states propaganda is spread by the government, and in democratic states, by special-interest groups, then in one case government must be controlled by an international association of nations; and in the other, special groups by the government.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Albig, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

³⁰ William H. Kilpatrick, *Teachers College Record*, 24:423.

CHAPTER XII

Censorship Barriers

A UNIVERSAL AND NEGATIVE WAY of directing the opinion-formation process is through censorship. A conversationalist does not always tell all that he knows. He may hold back the facts which might reflect adversely on him or on a cause that he espouses. The newspaper suppresses those facts from its columns which might keep important advertisers from patronizing its columns or arouse the extensive opposition to it of some institution such as a well-organized business group. The motion picture industry keeps some themes out of its films, and it in turn feels the negative urge of public-spirited bodies against playing up the risqué. The broadcasting companies avoid the presentation of various controversial issues. Small informal discussion groups have the greatest freedom from censorship. So universal and so powerful is censorship that its negative control in the process of opinion-making calls for intensive consideration.¹

1. *Censorship*

Censorship is suppression of a part or the whole of facts. It is restriction of communication. It involves inhibition of thinking. It limits the range of human expression and of activity.

Censorship is very old. Lucy M. Salmon reports that the first use of censorship was made by "the Church of Rome, when in 1501, Pope Alexander VI issued a bull against unlicensed printing," an order which was directed against books, and which was designed "by the Church to protect its members against the evils of heresy."² Censorship, however, goes back to decrees of

¹ Harwood L. Childs, *A Reference Guide to the Study of Public Opinion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934), pp. 65-68.

² Lucy M. Salmon, *The Newspaper and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 15.

emperors and even of tribal chiefs. The use of taboo among preliterate groups has the essence of censorship in it in the same way that parents' "don'ts" to their children today contain an element of censorship.

The theory behind censorship is that authority not only knows best but has responsibilities to perform regarding its charges.³ Moreover, it possesses the urge to continue itself in authority. In order to keep other authorities from developing, it exercises censorship. Censorship may be preventive or punitive.⁴ If the preventive is effective, the punitive is unnecessary, but where the first is not used or fails, the latter may be called into action. In the field of newspapers, magazines, and books a system of licensing may be developed. Licensing implies inspection and editing. Preventive censorship is the simplest way of controlling "the channels of opinion." On the other hand punitive censorship gives some leeway to writers and editors, but woe betide them if they step over the prescribed bounds. Among the usual forms of punishment are suspension of printing, fines, imprisonment.

Censorship may have bad effects on morale, especially among thinking persons. They grow restless because of inadequate information and they protest the way that censorship suppresses their desire for freedom. Restrictions breed wild rumors and festering resentments.

Censorship is both unofficial and official, and it is legal or unwritten. It may be imposed by any group on its members. Its violation invokes punishment. An individual who defies censorship may be ostracized or jailed or both.

Censorship is a negative accompaniment of propaganda. It is used by the propagandist as a means of limiting the channels of communication through which information may flow to the propagandist's subjects. A propagandist uses censorship to suppress all facts as far as possible that are detrimental to his cause. If his victims cannot learn the facts they are deprived of a basis for criticism. As a propaganda method censorship is exceedingly difficult to detect. The individual is helpless in the face of an effective censorship. His mouth is closed for him before he can open it. "In order to conduct a propaganda there must

³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46 ff.

be some barrier between the public and the event," and that barrier is censorship.⁵

A totalitarian dictator can regulate the attitudes of his people partly by telling them only that which reflects favorably on himself and his policies. Even a dictator, however, can go only so far in his suppression of news. After the Japanese military leaders reported one victory after another over China for five years, and after the people of Japan had been fed for five years on the weaknesses of China, the Japanese people began to suspect, as indicated in an earlier chapter, that important and disturbing facts had been kept from them. Otherwise, why wasn't the war over?

Thus censorship has limits beyond which it cannot go. While these limits are pronounced in a democracy, they are also real in a totalitarian state. No censor can long go beyond the common sense credulity of his followers. No censor can defy time too long in withholding the worst from those whose support he needs.

Censorship has been called the opposite of propaganda, for it is negative while the latter is positive in the sense that something is put forth, even though it be only a part of the truth which is spread in a distorted light. But censorship is exercised by somebody, and who is this somebody if not the propagandist? Censorship and propaganda, although opposite in nature, are used to the same ends, namely, controlling communication, and hence controlling public opinion.

Perhaps censorship and propaganda are not opposites so much as they are complementary. They fit together like hand in glove. Together they bowl truth over. Together they manipulate the facts. Together they prevent the rise and expression of a free public opinion, and defeat democracy.

The censor is usually one who deletes a part of the content of any medium of communication. He blots out or cuts off or suppresses a part of that which is to be communicated, such as a written report, a news article, a short story, a book, a film, a letter.

The written history of the term goes back at least to the fifth century, B.C. At that time in Rome, censors were appointed to

⁵ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), p. 43.

take a census and to look after the conduct of the people. These early censors indicated standards of behavior for people, and punished those persons who violated the rules laid down by the censors. In a broad sense today, people generally censor one another because of unapproved behavior.

With the advent of printing, printed materials promptly met with censorship. Censorship of books and magazines has grown apace. Censorship of films reached a high point a score of years ago. Censorship of mail in warring areas is universal.

For a moment another usage of the term censor may be examined. The psychoanalysts of the Freudian school have put the censor near the center of their thinking. To them the censor is that part of personality which evaluates the ego, or that conscious phase of personality which is primarily engaged in adjusting the feelings and impulses of the individual to his environment. These basic desires which are inherited often run counter to environmental rules and tendencies, and at times they may act tumultuously. Their action grows complicated when they are not allowed normal expression by the censor. A great deal of the repression of the impulses of personality takes place in the realm below the ego, that is, in the unconscious, and hence is difficult to understand, even by the individual himself. The effects upon both his feelings and upon his opinions and attitudes are difficult to locate and estimate. They are worthy of research.

The censor is particularly active in passing judgment on the work of the ego, which is the agency engaged in adjusting the instinctive tendencies of the "id" to the environment. The ego works more or less naturally, but the censor, critically, that is, in terms of the adjustment of the individual. The censor is sometimes called a super-ego, or a dominant form of consciousness. It is the most circumspect aspect of consciousness evaluating all the rest. It is a conning tower evaluating the opinions and attitudes of personality.

While the censor has hereditary origins, yet the standards which guide its judgments come in part from the culture patterns and in part from group opinion. The origins of the censor are partly socially derived.

Public opinion itself functions to a degree after the manner of a censor. It passes judgment, sometimes all too hastily and

recklessly. It too acts to adjust individuals to social environments.

In the case of both the censor within the individual and of public opinion as a censor, there is an unscientific passing of judgment on behavior. Censors can be trained and public opinion can become refined in line with carefully analyzed needs of personalities and of mankind. Such an achievement as a general practice doubtless lies far in the future.

Censorship may use threats as a method of getting people to withhold certain ideas or to refrain from doing certain things. It is a negative ordering of behavior in order to stop or suppress particular programs. It may suppress after a train of behavior has once been started or at least contemplated, or it may not allow its subjects to know what has been kept from their ears. It ranges from "don'ts" to deletions and from scolding to suppression.⁶

The world is full of censors. Everybody is a censor and thoughtlessly passes ill-conceived and half-baked judgments on strangers, enemies, and even on friends. There is a constant buzz of censorship going on in drawing rooms, over fences, on street corners, in hotel lobbies. The freedom with which informal censorship is practiced is one of the universal traits of mankind.

Informal censorship begins in homes. What an infinite number of "don'ts" are expressed daily within the family group? How many times is the language of children, acquired on the street, in alleys, on playgrounds, sharply censored by parents? How often are ideas that are frankly voiced by youth repressed by elders? How extensively opinions of youth are channeled in a particular direction by the adult members of the family?

Teaching exercises an informal censorship of the opinions and ideas of youth. Correcting papers, the bane of teaching, is a form of censorship exercised in behalf of skill and efficiency.

Preaching involves informal censorship in another related sense. Condemning is an informal type of censorship. Sermons censor both religious beliefs and behavior. Sin and evil are forever censored from the pulpit.

Informal censorship is an indirect way of suppressing ideas

⁶ See W. Brooke Graves, Editor, *Readings in Public Opinion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1928). Chapter XXXI.

and conduct. It obtains its goal through securing at least a practical degree of co-operation from its subjects. It deals with individuals, it uses persuasion, and it often dictates.

In daily social life dictators use suppression. Individuals are told by their superiors that they cannot hold certain beliefs or express certain ideas and remain in good standing and people are continually responding to this form of censorship.

Censorship has origins in standards of decency in speech. These standards vary of course, but they relate particularly to the use of profanity and of sex references. Because license in these connections is permitted on the stage as compared with the radio, the theater has fallen into disrepute among many people, while among other persons of different standards there are no objections. Occasionally a man is condemned for an outburst of emotion, culminating in profanity. It is evident that this type of informal censorship varies from those who have "cloister-softened ears" to those who have become hardened to an atmosphere of profanity and sex allusions.

2. Censorship of Speech

Censorship of speech is suppression of particular ideas. The use of penalties is resorted to as a means of enforcing censorship. Since censorship is negative and a penalty is also negative, one negative is used to enforce another, and people who violate censorship rules are doubly subject to negation. As a result of this utilization of double negation, censorship violations are likely to result in personality complexes and conflicts. These personality problems are usually ignored by society until they appear in exaggerated forms, such as mental breakdowns or revolutionary activities.

Censorship of speech occurs in informal ways. A too-talkative person who gets other people into trouble is privately reprimanded, or disowned, or ostracized.

A person who makes injudicious remarks likewise feels the sting of informal censorship. Some people do not talk much, but when they speak they say the wrong thing, for example, they "let the cat out of the bag." The ultimate recourse of informal censorship is to refrain from giving important information to the overtalkative or the injudicious person.

Informal censorship of conversation is the restriction put by

one person on other persons regarding the release of news. A million times daily the injunction is given, "I'll tell you, but don't you tell anybody." Commonly such accepted injunctions or mild forms of censorship are promptly violated by passing on "secret" news to another friend who is likewise committed to secrecy. A great deal of gossip represents violations of informal censorship.

Public censorship is expressed in rules. It may be a rule forbidding people to gather in groups and to discuss certain subjects. It may be a rule forbidding a public speaker from talking to an audience on particular themes. It may be a rule put forth by a group presumably for its own protection. It may be designed to prevent group division resulting from dissatisfaction.

Dictators show no pangs of conscience in maintaining a rigid censorship over topics of public discussion. They know no other way of procedure, except the use of violence. They regard censorship as a natural safeguard or an inexpensive way of protecting their own standing. They blandly ignore the psychological reactions against it and they may bring about their own downfall by ignoring the conditions over which they throw the blanket of censorship.

Democracies, however, are troubled by having to resort at times to censorship of speech. There is something contradictory about democracy and censorship. Democracy guarantees freedom of speech, and Article I of the Bill of Rights of the United States represents a protest against the suppression of speech by a central government.

The vital question arises: How far shall a democratic government allow the people to criticize democracy's methods and her blunders? A democracy that stops criticism of itself is no longer a democracy, but some kind of a dictatorship. An objective answer to the foregoing question is generally put this way: Any member of a democracy may criticize his government so long as he does not advocate its overthrow, and does not incite his audience to violence against their government or their fellow-men. Obviously these bars against free speech provide a minimum protection of a democracy against its enemies and against mob rule.

A clear-cut case of formal censorship is seen in parliamentary rules of order. An assembly requires an observance of rules of

order—why? Partly to keep the members from giving away in the heat of debate to aroused emotions, to calling each other names, and to engaging in fist-fights. For similar reasons members of a dignified body, such as the United States Senate, are not permitted to address each other from the floor by their names but must say, for example, "The Senator from Maine."

3. *Censorship of Press*

In a democracy great store is set on freedom of the press. Newspapers censor themselves according to the "traditions of decency." They are careful what profanity they repeat and what sex indecencies they admit to their pages from court testimonies or from reporters' descriptions of scandal. This is a self-imposed censorship that is maintained with continuous rigor.

Another type of self-imposed censorship by the newspaper is that of keeping from its pages any materials that would offend the large-scale advertisers. Here is a form of censorship that is far-reaching and highly significant in keeping vital materials out of the newspaper's columns and in coloring the write-up of the news.

Likewise the average metropolitan newspaper censors everything that is presented in its columns that might irritate "society" leaders, church dignitaries, and so on. Being a big business in itself it possesses a big business psychology. Further, it cannot afford to alienate the support of a large number of influential leaders in its region.

The press is exceedingly jealous of its freedom. It believes in censorship chiefly when it can exercise it. It objects to being censored but freely uses censorship at the expense of its readers. It wants to exercise censorship over the materials that are submitted to it for publication but objects to having its use of materials censored.

Although the newspaper exercises considerable censorship over its columns, it often runs counter to the opinions of various large-scale publics. In seeking circulation so that it may keep up its advertising rates, it plays up crime news, uses big headlines sometimes for trivial happenings, and in some cases it becomes what is called a "scandal sheet." Daily sales go up when "stories" featuring the sensational are played up. The result distorts public opinion on vital matters.

A newspaper develops its own public, that is, a large group of persons who read it in preference to other papers. These people swear by it as it were, even though they know that they are being definitely deceived. It is a puzzle to learn why people who want the truth persist in reading a newspaper which presents the news in a one-sided way. Perhaps the answer is found in the fact that people like to hear the kind of news that is favorable to their interests and prefer to think that they are winning rather than losing, even though they know they are losing. The partisan newspaper flourishes by feeding people on what partisans want to believe rather than the unvarnished truth.⁷

4. *Censorship of Books and Periodicals*

Publishers of books and magazines of course exercise censorship in order not to offend their reading publics. They are given some license or take some liberties in verging on profanity and vulgarities.

Subject matter also is censored by publishers, particularly that of public school and private school textbooks. Materials offering criticism of a prevailing economic system are examined minutely. Materials advocating racial intermarriage are generally taboo. Materials favoring birth control are likewise subject to deletion in certain communities. In order not to offend critics in all parts of a country as large and varied as the United States a textbook publisher sometimes emasculates a manuscript.

Another expression of censorship of books is illustrated by public libraries in refusing to buy and make books available to the public. Many important books are kept from the open shelves, while others are not purchased. In certain communities it is hardly possible for a public library to have on its shelves up-to-date books or even any books at all on certain subjects that young people in those communities are interested in and are getting information about from unreliable sources.

Religious authorities are especially sensitive regarding the books that their followers may read regularly. There is danger that belief in the teachings of a given religious group may be shaken by the reading of atheistic literature. It may be noted that

⁷ See Lucy M. Salmon, *Newspaper and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), Chapters II-V.

the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, as a famous list of books that are not to be read by loyal Catholics, contains no books written in the United States. In other words, American Catholics are given more freedom than are European Catholics, or perhaps the former insist on having more freedom. The aim in all censored lists of religious books is to prevent troublesome doubts from entering the religious follower's mind.

Magazines are especially subject to censorship if they verge on the indecent. A magazine that publishes stories using vile language or "playing up" illicit sex relations is likely to have one or more issues suspended. In the United States the post office authorities exercise the right of withholding any such magazine from the mails until the offending procedure is corrected.

In wartime, magazines containing articles that violate the censorship rules or offend the government or its leaders may be debarred from the mails. Totalitarian governments refuse to allow offending publications to be printed in their country and deny the use of the mails to such publications from other countries.

5. Censorship of Motion Pictures, Stage, and Art

Inasmuch as censorship of motion pictures has already received attention in a preceding chapter, it will suffice here to refer to this field of censorship as being one in which general public opinion has been sharply and widely divided. The proponents have been active because of the subtle influence of motion pictures, of the youthful immature minds of many regular attendants, and because of the exciting appeal of moving pictures and of sound to children and young people. Another factor may be mentioned, too, namely, the exaggerated influence of the movies because youth attend not as individuals but in groups. They are at an age when they are especially subject to crowd psychology and to indirect suggestion.

The fact that motion pictures in the United States which are made for adults are attended by boys and girls generally arouses a sense of the need for censorship in the minds of many people. The critics and censors ask: How old should a child be before he is introduced vividly to all the vices of adulthood and to crimes?

Censorship of motion pictures runs amuck because people cannot agree about what is for the best interest of the whole country. In a democracy there are so many different and differentiated interests that their representatives cannot agree on what are common interests, and cannot unite on a common censorship procedure. Everyone wants to be a censor, but he wants to censor others' behavior and escape censorship himself.

Motion pictures are built on the human feelings; the greatest response to them occurs when they stir up the animal feelings. It is at this point that censorship is demanded, yet objective standards are difficult to formulate and still more difficult to enforce.

The stage has long since felt the sting of censorship, partly because it has taken to itself great liberties with the conventional and the customary. It has aimed to arouse by shocking the sensibilities of the staid and steady members of society. It has thrown its verbal darts at marriage, the family, morals as ordinarily conceived, religion, the sissy man, the unsophisticated rural person.

The stage has felt far-reaching censorship at times by the police arm of government, especially when the language of the players has gone beyond the racy into the realm of the foul. It is repeatedly toying with the risqué. The classical drama never draws more than a small crowd compared with "the fast-stepping follies."

The stage has received the most significant censorship from a widespread public which censors by never attending a stage performance. It is ignored and does not enter the lives of millions who disprove of the standards as expressed in many plays.

Art has encountered many censorship bars.⁸ It has baffled its many censors because it is individualistic in its standards and in its lack of commonly accepted rules. Art in paintings and sculpture often has been misunderstood by the moralist. Art has always replied to these censors by claiming that a painting or a sculpture of the nude is naturally beautiful, but may be judged otherwise if the mind of the observer is crude and unsophisticated. It is claimed that a painting or a sculpture reflects no more vileness than is read into it by the observer.

⁸ H. M. Kallen, *Indecency and the Arts* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1930).

The debate between the true artist and the moralist censor goes on indefinitely, because the two are miles apart in their approach. Both may be quite sincere and human and yet they view life from opposite standpoints. Each is supported by large-scale publics, and by virile sets of public opinions. Each condemns and pities the other. Neither is able to make much of an appeal to the opposition.

6. Religion and Censorship

Religion exercises censorship over the beliefs and behavior of its members but reacts sharply against any censorship from outside sources. Each religion may teach that it is the true religion and that all others are in some essentials false, but no one willingly submits to censorship. Since each insists on its own superiority and that this superiority comes directly from God and not from any human source, therefore why submit to any human censorship?

Religious censorship is exercised over church members on the assumption that if the latter consider other religious teachings or the criticisms of their own religion they might experience serious doubts and stray from the faith. It is claimed by religious censors that religion is a matter not of reason and intellect but of faith and beliefs that have been received in the past through revelation from Divine sources. It is the obligation of the believer to accept the revealed teachings in perfect faith and without rational questioning. Any attempt to violate these principles is resisted by the religious censor in his work as guardian of his particular faith.

The conflict between church and state still rages at times. One may claim supreme authority which conflicts with the authority of the other. Each tries to censor the proclamations of the other. Each claims superior authority, one on spiritual grounds, and the other on political and national. As a rule a compromise is worked out but with neither being happy about the compromise.

Religions generally resist censorship of themselves because of their claim to Divine origins. They ask, Why should the Infinite be censored by the finite? Why should the heavenly be censored by the earthly? Why should God's will be censored by man?

7. *Censorship Policies*

In a totalitarian state the welfare of the nation as determined by a dictator is set as the standard for a censorship policy. The problem is fairly easy to solve. One person and his immediate advisers decide what is for the welfare of the state, and an appropriate policy is accordingly developed.

But public opinion must be recognized in either a totalitarian or an authoritarian state. When Getulio Vargas suddenly "took over" in Brazil in 1937 and dismissed the Parliament he spoke over the radio to explain his action and announced that his usurping of power was "in response to public opinion and with the support of the armed forces."⁹

Moreover, the censorship policy of the dictator must be supported by constructive measures. In other words, "in the long run no government, however powerful its method of compulsion may be, can defy public opinion."¹⁰ While censorship must hold down "adverse public opinion and destructive criticism," it must parallel its censorship procedures with a program "of cultural nationalization and of emotionalization of national values."¹¹

In a democracy, how can censorship of opinions be justified? Is not censorship incompatible with democracy? If permissible, under what circumstances? Various answers may be ventured.

In a democracy where freedom prevails some individuals are bound to use language that is ribald. Some individuals are certain to get in the way of others. Some are likely to assume more than their share of rights.

Various forms of behavior are permissible to everyone in a democracy to the point where he does not harm others. Beyond that point they have to be stopped or forbidden or censored. The general public welfare needs to be safeguarded if need be by censorship. There are limits beyond which individuals cannot go in the exercise of freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, and so on. Liberty has to be stopped short of license. Freedom is the middle of the road between license and total

⁹ Karl Loewenstein, *Brazil Under Vargas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), p. 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 253 and 285.

control, but not all people can keep in the middle, or even near it. In a democracy they are likely to stray into the ditch, taking others with them. Censorship puts up the bars to protect children from sophistication and untrained adults from licentiousness.

Democracy is prone to engage unduly in negative censorship. A series of "don'ts" is often the voice of the censor in a democracy, but "don'ts" arouse resentment.

A clever technique of democratic leadership may be called positive censorship. It involves the call to positive activities which draw people away from destructive tendencies. If constructive tasks are developed to attract attention away from undesirable action, a "do" substituted for a "don't," and a positive line of action substituted for a negative one, democracy will be conserved and public opinion will develop countless constructive stimuli.

Part IV

Measuring Public Opinion

CHAPTER XIII

Polls and Scales

THE MEASURING of public opinion requires its own yardstick. The development of successful polls and of accurate scales is exceedingly difficult, because public opinion is so very elusive. The origins of public opinion in any instance may be traced back to subjective personal opinions, which in turn may be expressions of the still more subjective attitudes. The explanations of many attitudes take one into the intricacies of the formation of personality out of culture patterns (traditions and customs) and out of personal experiences in childhood. Nevertheless, one of the best ways to study public opinion is to measure it.

1. Public Opinion Polls

The oldest and simplest method of measuring group opinion is by calling for an aye and nay vote. If the voting is close the more objective method of asking for a show of hands or a standing vote is necessary.

When the group is large and scattered over an extensive area, another method such as voting by ballot is utilized. The earliest voting by ballot was like that of voting by aye or nay, or by the show of hands, in that it was not secret. Open ballot voting is a form in which intimidation may be used. Voters are threatened with loss of jobs unless they vote in a way demanded by bosses or other leaders. The larger the voting public and the more isolated the individual members, the greater the possible use of intimidation.

The next development was a plebiscite. A proposition or executive proposal is set forth and the voters are asked to vote on it. Even where secret voting is supposed to obtain, those in authority who want a favorable vote are able to issue dire threats and to discover who the people are who vote unfavorably. When overwhelming support is desired, the unfavorable

votes may not even be counted. Often the rights of secret voting are denied. Persecution may befall those who dare to vote against a proposal for which endorsement by an autocrat or a totalitarian is sought.

Genuine secret balloting is a fairly accurate means of discovering the true state of public opinion at a given time. It is a relatively simple, inexpensive, simultaneous, and quick procedure.

If the expression of opinion is close, then charges of false counting of the ballots or even of false voting may be made. Under such circumstances no clear cut majority opinion stands out.

At this point the question may be raised whether a bare majority vote, that is, one vote over half or even a fifty-one per cent vote is democratically adequate. In such instances the negative vote is so large that the people who are unfavorable may nullify the rule of the majority. If the loyalty of the majority runs low or if the feelings of the minority are aroused, then an alive minority will more than offset the attitudes of a lethargic majority.

In consumer co-operative societies a bare majority may be taken as an indication that more discussion is necessary before a given proposal is adopted. It is believed that the consensus vote is more democratic than a majority vote, for the former aims to arrive at actions that are approved by all or nearly all the members of the voting group, whereas the latter may mean that one partisan group has put up a more expensive fight for its interests than did the losers.

A specialized way of recording public opinion is preferential voting. The idea is to give the voter an opportunity to express his first, second, and other choices of candidates. Thus, if no candidate receives a majority vote, the first and second choices are added together in order to obtain a more accurate picture of opinion reactions. This method is sometimes used in city but not in nationwide elections because of the time required for counting the ballots and of the possibilities of introducing errors into the counting procedure.

In connection with elections the practice has spread in recent decades of finding out beforehand how the wind of public opinion is blowing. The best known procedure is that of taking a

straw ballot in selected small gatherings, not a real ballot but a make-believe one, in order to learn what the prevailing opinion is regarding a proposal.

The *Literary Digest* Poll is the best known of the early polls in the United States. It essayed to report prior to a national election how public opinion was divided regarding presidential candidates. Its downfall as a reliable guide was due to its method. It chose the names of telephone subscribers and automobile owners to whom to send straw ballots. These names may have been sampled well, but the first difficulty centered in the large numbers of persons who did not mark and return their ballots. This group of unknown opinions was hard to estimate in terms of its presidential choices. Out of 10,000,000 ballots mailed out in 1936 a return of less than 2,400,000 ballots was reported. A more serious problem was that telephone subscribers and automobile owners represent the upper economic classes more largely than the lower ones, and hence the returns came from a special group of the general public rather than from the whole public. In a time of economic prosperity, when members of all classes were more or less satisfied with their economic status, the method turned out to be fairly accurate. In a depression period the *Literary Digest* Poll failed to learn the opinions of the lower economic classes and fell wide of the mark of reliability as an opinion test. In 1936, the *Literary Digest* predicted that Mr. Landon would be elected president with 370 electoral votes, but the election actually went to President Roosevelt, who won 523 electoral votes and Mr. Landon only eight votes.

The newer method, selective sampling, uses the interview procedure. The American Institute of Public Opinion, usually known as the Gallup Poll, has achieved the most recognition, although in the presidential election of 1948 its predictions missed the mark widely.¹ The Gallup method takes into consideration that there are subgeneral publics in the United States, and it endeavors to find out what are the intentions of these publics in view of their different interests.

The Gallup procedure also takes into consideration the actual-voting public, namely, those who will really go to the polls and

¹ George Gallup and Saul F. Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy, the Public Opinion Poll and How it Works* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940).

vote. Even so, it cannot anticipate weather conditions in different parts of the nation, especially in rural districts where weather affects the percentage of persons who vote. Mr. Gallup claims that the poll may give a more accurate account of the state of public opinion than does actual voting because it recognizes those who do not vote on account of weather, illness, and so on.

By its nature the interview method uses a small sample. This weakness is largely overcome if the small sample is truly representative. In districts where it is believed that an election will be very close and subject to last minute fluctuations, the sample is usually increased greatly. Small samples lack reliability to the degree that uniformity of opinion is lacking in a region.²

The Gallup interviewers number some over 1,000 persons who live in various parts of the United States. Fifty interviews by each would give a sample of at least 50,000 voters, which is obviously a small number when the total voting population of the nation is considered. Accuracy in sampling thus becomes vital.

About one-half of the Gallup interviewers are reported as being men and women from the professions. Two-thirds are men. Ninety per cent have some college education. The median age has been given as thirty. About one-third are Republican in their sympathies; one-third, Democratic; and one-third, independent.

In sampling, the Gallup Poll divides the national public into subpublics according to region, occupation, age, sex, political affiliation, race, religion, and general cultural backgrounds.³ "Stratified random" sampling, or sampling by different cultural types and levels, increases accuracy.⁴

The wording of the questions that are asked by the interviewers is given special attention by the Gallup Poll. The Poll recognizes how answers may be easily influenced by the way the questions are phrased. It gives attention to the many different types of questions, to the relative merits of dichotomous questions and of multiple or "cafeteria" questions, and to the "free

² Hadley Cantril, *Gauging Public Opinion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 171.

³ Gallup, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁴ Cantril, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

answer" questions. A battery of questions is likely to secure more accurate results than a few questions.

Another important aspect of the Gallup Poll is the fact that the interview procedure is not a secret ballot. Even though the interviewer proceeds in a somewhat impersonal manner, the face-to-face relationship of interviewer and interviewee cannot be ignored entirely; it has its influence on the opinion results. How far, for instance, does the person interviewed respond to the question that is asked him and how far to the interviewer? How far does the interviewer unconsciously influence the answers that he obtains? In the investigations that are reported by Cantril it is indicated that differences between the status of the interviewee and of the interviewer affect the reliability of the results, especially where the interviewee feels that his status will be affected by the answers he gives. As one would expect, differences "between interviewers and respondents on the ground of class or race definitely hamper rapport and create a distortion of true opinion."⁵ It was also found that there is an inverse connection between "the degree of relationship between interviewers' and respondents' opinions and the size of the town in which interviewing occurs."⁶ In small towns the interviewers gain rapport more easily with the interviewees than do interviewers in the large city, and obtain better results. On the other hand a close, personal rapport stimulates the interviewee on certain questions to give answers that will not lower his own status.

The attitudes of the interviewer despite his education and training are subject to a bias which affects the answers he obtains. The trained interviewer is better than the untrained in getting detailed answers, but the latter as a rule develops rapport more easily and more readily.⁷ Moreover, it appears that opinions obtained by middle-class interviewers are more conservative than those obtained on the same question by working-class interviewers.⁸ Hence, in order to offset the effects of unconscious or covert bias on the part of the interviewers, it is necessary to "choose an equal number of interviewers who are

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

biased in different directions.”⁹ However, this is not an easy task. Moreover, the degree to which an interviewer is biased in any direction is also a vital factor. A slight bias may not be nearly so influential in affecting the answers of interviewees as a pronounced one that is partly disclosed.

How does the amount of information on a subject that is being “polled” affect the interviewee’s opinion? How is the answer of the informed different from that of the uninformed? In a preliminary study of public opinion regarding Argentina’s neutral position during the early years of World War II, Shirley Hitz reports that persons in the United States who were informed on Argentinian affairs distinguished between the attitudes of the Argentine government and the Argentine people, while the persons uninformed on Argentinian affairs lumped the government and the people of Argentina together and generalized adversely toward all. The informed persons pronounced the government pro-Axis and the rank and file of the people, pro-Ally. Again, the experts held that the United States was opposed to the importation of Argentine beef because of its competition with local beef, whereas the uninformed citizens were of the opinion that Argentinian beef was kept out of the country because it was diseased.¹⁰ Cantril concludes that information makes people sensitive regarding the implications of events, and that differences in the opinions of the informed and the uninformed are almost nil where “both groups are equally lacking in reliable standards of judgment.”¹¹

When educational factors and economic factors come in conflict, which has the greater influence on personal opinions and hence on the public opinion that is involved? Cantril’s studies give a fairly satisfactory answer. Where financial interests are involved economic level seems to play a greater role than educational development. This greater role of economic self-interest, however, expresses itself differently when the opinions of the lower and of the higher economic classes are considered separately. Both groups desire change, or growth, but lower economic levels desire change in the socioeconomic structure of

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁰ Shirley Hitz, “Social Significance of Inadequate Information,” *Sociology and Social Research*, 29:206 ff.

¹¹ Cantril, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

society, while the higher levels desire growth and change "without change in the social structure."¹²

The public opinion poll uses the "breakdown" technique to good advantage. Although it is important to know how the people of the United States, for instance, are going to vote regarding a given presidential candidate, it is enlightening to know how the poll goes when the opinions of men and women are considered separately. It is also useful to break down the total results into opinions by regions as well as by sex or by economic levels.

The failure of the polls in predicting the results of the presidential election of 1948 was due to a number of factors.¹³ (a) Not enough attention was given in pre-election days to the undecided voters. (b) Possible shifts in opinion-formation in the last two weeks were overlooked. (c) The lethargy of those who were sure that Dewey would be elected and the probable failure to vote of some of these people was not weighted adequately. (d) The cocksureness with which the pollsters absorbed opinions from many leaders on both sides threw them off their guard regarding shifts that were taking place under the one-man appeals of the President to the various minority groups, such as the farmers and the Negroes.

The question has been raised by Blumer: Do the polls actually deal with public opinion?¹⁴ At least the pollsters do not identify "the object which they are supposedly seeking to study, to record, and to measure." They seem to lack a conceptual point of reference and to shy clear of setting up and testing hypotheses concerning the nature of public opinion.¹⁵

It is also contended that a great deal of opinion research to date has been market research instead of basic research in the social sciences and that the pressures of the market place upon opinion research tend to produce a serious bias and a certain one-sidedness in the results.¹⁶ Some of the errors in public opin-

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹³ E. S. Bogardus, "Public Opinion and the Presidential Election of 1948," *Social Forces*, October, 1949.

¹⁴ Herbert Blumer, "Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling," *American Sociological Review*, 3:542 ff.

¹⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁶ Calvin F. Schmid, "The Measurement of Public Opinion," *Sociology and Social Research*, 34:90.

ion research have been summarized under such headings as interviewer fallibility, unreliability of interviewees, the role of the interviewer-interviewee interactional processes, disparities in the group memberships and statuses of interviewers and interviewees, the role of situational factors involved in the interviewing procedure.¹⁷

Another weakness of the polls is found in the fact that they do not take into consideration the varying degrees of influence of the individuals who are polled; ¹⁸ they do not show who are and who are not contributing "to the structuralization of public opinion." Hence, they are not reliable guides to legislation. However, numerous office-holders are paying for polls in their political districts "in order to determine how closely what they wanted to say appear to tally with what was already being said." ¹⁹ The polls need to be developed greatly before they can be reliable political guides.

In discussing why the Polls of 1948 "were so wrong," Rensis Likert stresses three important points. (a) The sampling was done largely on a quota basis for different economic levels of society and occupations, and the interviewers were allowed to select their respondents, which were often those easiest to interview. An area basis is conceived to be better, with the central polling office selecting the particular individuals to be interviewed in the given areas. (b) The questionnaires have been too simple, calling often for yes or no answers or for a choice out of three or four possibilities. An improved method is to make an indirect approach, to ask open questions, and to obtain some idea concerning the basis of a person's reaction to a public issue or a candidate in terms of his past experiences, frames of references, emotional expressions. This method calls for very careful analysis, but it may help in predicting who will turn out to vote on election and who will not, and also how the "don't know" vote may vote. (c) Probability sampling is also advocated as being statistically defensible and as having a reasonable degree of reliability. This technique calls for the use

¹⁷ Herbert Hyman, "Problems in the Collection of Opinion-Research Data," *The American Journal of Sociology*, LV:362 ff.

¹⁸ Robert C. Sorensen, "Public Opinion Polls and the Legislator," *Sociology and Social Research*, 34:323 ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

of considerable knowledge of statistical procedure, and for trained research workers.²⁰

The pollsters have not as a rule distinguished between the intensity of feeling that each interviewed person possesses on the subject matter of the interview. They have not given much attention to the fact that some of the interviewed persons exert almost no influence in a campaign and that others are very influential. The pollsters apparently have been satisfied with an "unweighted count of individual opinions."²¹

However, the Institute of Public Opinion goes much further than predicting election results. The Institute carries on each week a poll regarding different questions that are being considered by public opinion. The results are reported in the newspapers which subscribe to this service, and they probably play a significant role in affecting public opinion. In fact politicians have objected to straw ballots on the ground that when they indicate that an election is going in a given way there is a bandwagon rush in the direction which otherwise would not take place. This contention has been seriously challenged by students of the effects of the polls preceding the Presidential election in 1948 in the United States.

The reporting of polls between elections gives legislators and public administrators a definite idea regarding public opinion on particular matters. It instructs them, as it were, in ways to represent their constituents more or less intelligently. On the other hand it is contended that public opinion polls influence legislators unduly, that legislators pay more attention to the polls than to the findings of experts, and that the uninformed public speaks louder through polls than do the merits of a given issue through experts. There may be something to the argument that polls have a tendency to undermine the theory of representative government.²²

A regular reporting through polls keeps various issues before the general public. It stimulates discussion of and interest in

²⁰ Rensis Likert, "Public Opinion Polls," *Scientific American*, 179:7-11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 552. Regarding the November, 1950, elections in the United States it may be stated that the polling agencies achieved a fair degree of accuracy in their predictions. It was evident that they had used more refined methods of polling voters than had been the case in previous years.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. vii, viii.

questions that would otherwise command attention of small publics only. It promotes democracy.²³

Although in no democracy that has entered a war have the people ever voted to do so, or been given a chance to do so, a poll gives a fairly accurate straw ballot and indicates the state of public opinion regarding so vital a matter as declaring war. It offsets the failure to secure a nationwide vote without a change in laws.

2. *Measuring Opinions*

A great deal of the experimental work that has been done on the measurement of opinions and attitudes has related to opinions rather than to attitudes. Of course, an opinion may be an expression of an attitude, but ordinarily an opinion is something far less important than an attitude. An opinion may be merely a guess. A person may say that he thinks that it would be a good thing if so-and-so were elected governor, meaning that it is his opinion that so-and-so would make a good governor. Often such a statement implies reservations. Often a person feels quite free to change his opinion. An opinion may be offered in defense of an attitude. It is an expression in favor of or opposed to a given idea or plan or person.

A simple form of opinion measurement gives a person a four-fold choice of expression, namely, yes, no, doubtful, and no opinion. This is but a slight enlargement upon aye-nay voting. It gives a chance to obtain a picture of the degree to which a public is uncertain and uninformed.

A slightly more elaborate but yet simple type of opinion yardstick is found in what is called the crossing-out test. A list of words, from 50 to 100, is given a person who is asked to draw a line through each word which gives him a more disagreeable than agreeable feeling upon reading it. This test connects opinions directly with pleasant or unpleasant reactions. To a degree it is an approach to an attitude test, for attitudes more often than opinions are laden with feelings.

Another type of opinion test gives a person several choices, perhaps five, regarding a proposition. For example, suppose that the proposition is: World peace requires the establishment of an international police system. The five choices may be given

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 257 ff.

as follows: Strongly agree, agree, doubtful, disagree, strongly disagree. When the results of submitting this test to a large number of people are obtained, they show not only the proportion who favor, who are opposed, and who are in doubt, but they denote what per cent are definitely in favor, are definitely opposed, and are lukewarm.

3. *Intensity of Opinions*

To know the intensity of opinion or more accurately of the feeling that accompanies opinion is vital. A minority opinion full of conviction is likely to nullify a majority opinion that is lacking in feeling. A defeated opposition is likely to feel more deeply than a winning majority, and hence a two-thirds majority may be needed in order to guarantee the continued and successful support of a given proposition or law.

A related kind of test offers a choice as follows: very good, good, doubtful value, bad, very bad. Its highly subjective nature is self-evident. Moreover one person's interpretation of any of the five terms, such as, good, is likely to be different from that of another person's definition. One person's standard for good may be much higher than that of someone else. Hence the results to a degree will be invalidated.

The procedure of ranking may also be utilized in measuring opinion. This is a matter of asking persons to rank a series of proposals in order of first, second, third, fourth (and so on) choices. It is used in preferential voting as already indicated. It affords democratic possibilities in the expression of personal choices and permits every individual to indicate the variations in his evaluations. It enables a person to give a comparative evaluation, subjective, to be sure, of his choices in a particular field.

Other feasible methods of measuring public opinion make noteworthy variations of some of the techniques already suggested. For instance, it is possible in considering public opinion to obtain from reading the newspapers and magazines and from listening to radio talks a list of leading issues of the day. By joint selection on the part of several competent and representative persons these issues may be stated accurately.²⁴

²⁴ Joseph M. Bobbitt, "The Measurement of Public Opinion," *Sociology and Social Research*, 19:55-60.

Next, the several possible solutions are carefully worded by competent persons. It is necessary that there be a collaboration in stating these possible solutions and perhaps that there be some experimentation in determining which of the various proposals are generally considered the most important.

When each issue is stated objectively and the three or four proposed solutions that the public is considering are submitted to a group of voters they may be asked to do two things—first, to check each statement, Relatively important, or Relatively unimportant. In this way the voters will indicate which problems are considered vital and which are not vital.

Second, each may be asked to check the one, of the three or four possible solutions that are given for each proposition, that he favors most. Thus, a person indicates which statements he considers important and which of the important ones he favors.

By using this public opinion test with different groups of people it is possible to compare their opinions regarding the relative importance of different issues and to obtain their reactions to the relative significance of different solutions for any particular issue. In his experimental work, Joseph M. Bobbitt found that opinion generally favors rather strongly one or another of the possible solutions of a problem, and that opinion tends definitely to be influenced in many instances by a dominant political or economic group. Obviously further experimentation is needed in order that significant results may be obtained.

In the writer's opinion-test eight choices are afforded and six types of intensity may be indicated.²⁵ The choices are indicated by +3, +2, +1, a zero, a zero with a hyphen dividing it, —1, —2, and —3. The plus numbers and the minus ones provide a grading procedure ranging from very favorable to very unfavorable. The zero indicates no information and the divided zero connotes a deadlocked state of mind with the facts and arguments on each side being considered of more or less equal strength. The plain zero and the divided one give useful information about the non-voter, the indifferent voter, and the nonplussed voter. They show to what extent people are uninformed and to what degree they are deadlocked.

²⁵ E. S. Bogardus, "A Social Distance Scale," *Sociology and Social Research*, 17:265-271.

The plus threes and the minus zeros are very significant. They represent dynamic opinions, that is, the persons who possess conviction and are likely to accompany opinion with definite action, either for or against some proposal. A test of this kind does not escape all the effects of differences in subjective judgments and in meanings for the various points ranging from plus three to minus three.

In preparing the forementioned test the question arose as to how many choices should be allowed on both the positive and the negative sides of the test. Dr. H. Earl Pemberton experimented with five degrees, four degrees, and three degrees of positive reactions, and with similar degrees of negative reaction.²⁶ He found that most persons have difficulty in distinguishing between five degrees of either favorable or unfavorable reaction. In fact four degrees are too many. Three different degrees in one direction are as many as most persons can distinguish between with reliability.

People have been classified into three groups according "to the intensity of feeling with which they support a principle."²⁷ Williams calls one the acquiescent group. Its members just habitually agree. A second is the exhortation group which is composed of people who concentrate on urging others to support a cause. A third group is labeled sacrificial. Its members will work and suffer for a cause. Variations of intensity are noted within each of these three groups. This classification is offered as a rough gradation of persons from those of low intensity of opinion on a given subject to those of high intensity.

4. Attitude Scales

The measurement of attitudes is exceedingly difficult because of their subjective nature. Measurement requires objectification of attitudes, which is not easy to obtain without affecting their meaning. In the last analysis behavior is the best test of an attitude, and attitude measurement becomes behavior measurement. It is much simpler to measure opinions, and yet this undertaking has proved baffling enough.

²⁶ H. Earl Pemberton, "Optimum Rating Scale for Public Opinion," *Sociology and Social Research*, 17:470-472.

²⁷ Benjamin H. Williams, "Public Opinion in a World of Politics," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2:362.

Attitude scales are framed as objectively as possible.²⁸ A large number of different statements regarding a given phase of life are obtained from many sources. For example, the field may relate to the different ways that people react to racial and ethnic groups. Some of the statements might vary from "Would marry" to "Would debar from my country," with many intermediate degrees of race reactions represented by such phrases as "Would live as next door neighbors," "Would work beside in an office," or "Would take as personal guest to a social affair."

A hundred persons, for example, are invited to serve as judges, acting independently of one another. Each judge classifies all the statements into six, seven, or ten groups, as may be determined beforehand by the person in charge of making the scale. The statements are arranged in groups of ascending (or descending) affirmation (or negation) regarding the given field of human activity. The arithmetic mean is found for each statement and all are arranged in consecutive order from lowest to highest in rating (or vice versa). If there be sixty-one statements then every tenth one is chosen, beginning with the highest, and a seven point scale is set up with the intervals between each item being of equal value as rated by the judges. The scale therefore ranges from one point to seven points.²⁹

Persons are asked to give their reactions to a list, for instance, of ethnic groups in terms of the seven point scale. Various methods of scoring the results are available. The easiest, with a high degree of reliability, is to score each person in terms of the number of the column in the scale nearest the left that is checked by the subject.

A less laborious method of making scales than the Thurstone procedure of using raters or judges has been devised. It uses sigma or standard deviation units. It assumes that attitudes are distributed according to the normal curve. Its reliability is high, but it is of value primarily to the student of the theory of measurements of attitudes rather than to the general student of public opinion.

In the writer's ethnic distance scale a list of races is provided and the racial distance quotient may be considered as the arith-

²⁸ See L. L. Thurstone and E. J. Chave, *The Measurement of Attitude* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932).

²⁹ See E. S. Bogardus, "A Social Distance Scale," *loc. cit.*

metic mean of the column nearest the left that is checked.³⁰ Thus, it becomes possible to compare the ethnic distance reactions of a large number of persons. These could vary from as low as one to as high as seven, although actually they may be expected to run from a number between one and two to five or six or thereabouts. One represents the least ethnic distance and seven the greatest. If the ethnic distance quotients of the members of a group of people are obtained, then it is possible to compare their group ethnic distance with that of some other group of people, and to gain an idea concerning the way public opinion feels toward one race after another.

By this same method it is feasible to secure an ethnic distance quotient for any racial group by taking the arithmetic mean of the quotients of persons toward that race. In this way the ethnic distance score given a minority group could be compared with the score given each of several other minority groups by the same persons or with the scores accorded the same ethnic group by other groups of people. In this way the relative degree of favorable opinion toward each ethnic group may be obtained from a large population.

If any of these ethnic distance quotients are obtained according to some time interval such as a year, it is possible to measure the changes in ethnic distance reactions. Ethnic opinion changes may be secured for a person, or for a whole group of persons, or on a comparative basis for several groups, or for a large public. Changes in public opinion may be studied in this manner.

5. Changes in Opinions and Attitudes

An interesting study of changes in opinions is that of giving a group of persons an opinion test at the beginning of a series of discussion meetings, lectures, or of a course of study and then of repeating the test at the conclusion and again at some time after the conclusion of the series. In this way it is possible to gain some idea of the effectiveness of the teaching process. The comparative significance of various methods of influencing people in a political campaign can be examined. There are also possibilities of learning the lasting effects of different

³⁰ *Ibid.*

methods of influencing people by the use of a test when an interval of six months or more has elapsed after the original experiment was conducted.³¹

How rapidly changes in attitudes occur is a field barely scratched by research workers. Under what conditions do changes occur? How lasting are changes in opinion? Under what conditions are they most lasting? These are a few of the questions which invite scientific research.

In college classes in ethnic relations the writer has given tests to students at the beginning of the course and again at the end in order to find out what some of the immediate trends in student's reactions have been. The changes usually take place in those opinions toward particular ethnic groups that were not definitely formulated for or against such groups at the beginning of the course. As a result of such a course there is usually, however, a definite increase on the part of the class as a whole in their feelings of race friendliness.

Where attitudes are pronounced at the beginning of the course, either in terms of ethnic antagonism or of ethnic friendliness, then barring exceptions, no great changes take place. The person who is definitely prejudiced against a given group remains prejudiced. He usually reports that intellectually he has come to see how his prejudice indicates a narrowness of attitudes but that his adverse feelings are too deep-seated and dynamic to enable him to change his attitudes. The person who is already friendly toward a specific minority group continues friendly or increases his friendliness slightly as a result of his study. This type of study indicates the influence of a type of teaching which disseminates facts.

When teaching is of the indoctrination type and the teacher speaks with conviction and with feeling one way or another the influence in the direction of indoctrination is very pronounced on the part of those pupils who like the teacher, who are responsive to the force of the personality of the teacher, and who do not have strong convictions to the contrary. Those who think most react deeply against indoctrination, and tend to move away from the indoctrination objectives. Apparently some pupils become hypocrites and "agree" with the indoctrinator for the

³¹ See W. G. Binnewies, "Measuring Changes in Opinion," *Sociology and Social Research*, 16:143-148.

sake of grades or status, or in order to be polite. A few who recognize the indoctrination attempt accept it for whatever they think it is worth. The younger the pupils the more likely they are to be subject to indoctrination. The more closely their own philosophy of life fits in with the indoctrination ideas, the more likely they are to swallow the latter whole.

One of the most important of the studies of changes in attitudes has been made by Gardner and Likert.³² They repeated their "Survey of Opinions" five years after the Survey was originally given to Columbia University students. A large sample of the original group was still available after five years had elapsed, but the sampling error was "known to be large." The results showed a "considerable radical shift" in opinions relating to political and economic questions, due, it is believed, to experiences that had happened to the individuals in the five-year interval. This shift was interpreted not so much as a protest against economic conditions as an attempt to see conditions more broadly.

By careful study, for example, areas of high racial tension may be discovered before race riots break out, and by the use of careful publicity and educational measures riots may be prevented.³³ It is possible to locate both the areas of high racial tension and of low tension in a given region. Moreover, the location of areas of racial tension suggests that other kinds of social, economic, or religious tensions may be discovered in a like manner, and reduced by educational procedures.

If in addition to the ethnic distance quotients of persons their religious distance reactions are obtained, and their attitudes toward political measures and toward economic systems and policies are secured, then a configuration of a person's opinions and attitudes relative to different phases of life and social values may be worked out. Are persons conservative in all their major attitudes and opinions, or are they liberal in all, or conservative in some regards and liberal in others? If the last-mentioned possibility is common, are there any characteristic patterns of such associations of attitudes? If so, what are they, and how

³² Gardner Murphy and Rensis Likert, *Public Opinion and the Individual* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), Chapter VII.

³³ E. S. Bogardus, *Immigration and Race Attitudes* (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1927), Chapter XVIII.

definitely can they be counted upon in the process of changing public opinion? These are important questions for discussion groups and seminars to study.

If there are definite associations of attitude patterns toward given phases of life, what are the explanations of these types of conjuncture? Such a problem calls for the interview method of research as an aid of statistical measurement. By interviews and life histories it may be possible to obtain explanations for the various integrations of attitudes. The joint use of statistical and interview methods in studying integrations of attitudes will throw light on the nature of personality, and clarify the nature of personality configuration.

The use of scales for obtaining a quantitatively accurate picture of the backgrounds of general public opinion can be carried further by measuring objective culture phenomena. F. Stuart Chapin, for example, has pioneered in the measurement of social institutions and of selected culture patterns characteristic of institutions.³⁴ Difficult enough, the task, however, does not compare with the pitfalls involved in measuring quantitatively the highly subjective phases of life such as attitudes.³⁵

The data given in this chapter comprise an exhibit of some of the more practical methods of measuring opinions and attitudes. It also discloses some of the problems involved. Some of the techniques that have been devised for measuring opinion through the use of special statistical formulae become so involved that they fail of their own weight in giving practical help in measuring public opinion. If they are to be used widely, public opinion scales must be kept within simple bounds.

The measurement of public opinion for research purposes, such as obtaining new light on the nature of public opinion, is another important problem. A great deal of valuable experimentation is going on in this field and some of it will yield new insight into the nature of the public opinion process.

The measurement tests give attention to quantitative reports on the number of opinions on various issues, on the various

³⁴ See F. Stuart Chapin, *Contemporary American Institutions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), Part V.

³⁵ In this connection the journal of *Sociometry* may be mentioned as offering data on the latest developments in sociometric methods.

ways of deciding an issue, on the intensity of opinion, or on the extent of changes in opinions. Little has as yet been attempted in determining qualitatively why people hold the opinions that they express, how they arrive at them, or the inner nature of opinion itself. Little attention has been given to analyzing statistically the processes by which personal opinions are made or unmade, or to fathom the depths of the public opinion process. These are some of the difficult questions to which the case study method essays to find answers.

Considerable material relating to the analysis of attitudes, opinions, and group dynamics may be found in journals such as *Human Relations* and *The Journal of Social Issues*.

CHAPTER XIV

Case Studies of Public Opinion

THE CASE STUDY METHOD of considering public opinion has its own procedures. Light is thrown on this approach by taking a look at the case methods of studying law and of doing social work. On these bases it will be helpful to review four case studies of public opinion. The first two studies have been selected because they are now historical and freed from changes taking place at present. Both are relatively free from current controversial aspects. Both extended over a period of about three-fourths of a century. Both began about the middle of the nineteenth century and reached into the first two or three decades of the present century—a time span that gives ample opportunity to study the process aspects of opinion-formation. Both the woman's suffrage movement and the prohibition movement represented a battle royal for a favorable majority opinion in the United States. The third case study relates to the development of public opinion during World War II regarding the evacuation of the Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans from the West Coast. It illustrates the opinion-formation process as affected by war psychology. The fourth illustration is still more recent and represents a very short time span of only three months. The political opinion that was generated during the presidential campaign of 1948 in the United States possesses special features. The chapter will be concluded with a statement of the social significance of these case studies of public opinion.

1. The Case Study Approach

In legal studies the case method is well established and involves a thoroughgoing analysis of one court decision after another in order to discover the basic points of law. Precedents are considered. All the data that are available which explain the given decision are scrutinized. Quantitative procedures of

measurement as such are taken into consideration. Thus the principles are built up in an inductive way, step by step.

Social case work has a case study approach, for it begins and ends in helping a person or the members of a family in trouble. The emphasis is on one person or one family. The unit of study is small. Personal problems are considered in their genetic aspects and in their relations to all of the environmental factors. Each case is made the center of attention, and each is viewed as a unit in itself.

Social case work is the opposite of the statistical approach. It seeks out all the subjective factors, such as opinions, attitudes, unsatisfied longings, thwarted desires, ways of reacting to frustrations, loves, hates, in a person's life and tries to find connections between them and to understand them. It traces a personal or a mental conflict back through its natural history to its beginning. It starts by moving backward from one explanatory experience to another. It searches for sequences in experiences and in reaction to them. It investigates the origins of opinions and attitudes.

Of course the social case method is not research alone. Its main aim is to help a person to help himself and in so doing it carries on research. Treatment does not follow research. In fact treatment begins with the first interview. This treatment-research combination need not blind anyone to the merits of the case method of research.

In the next place, social case analysis as developed by the sociologist is coming to the fore in research. It refers to the use of interview and life history materials in human investigation. As its research materials are being gathered it proceeds by classifying each item of experience and of reaction into its proper niche in recognized knowledge, and by establishing new categories. By properly classifying a human reaction or a personal opinion it becomes understood.

When a reaction is not classifiable in any of the known and understood categories of knowledge, then further examples are sought. When a number of similar new reactions are located a new category of knowledge is set up. As soon as the category is defined then each of its items becomes understood. Social case analysis proceeds from case to case, from classification to further classification, and from understanding to more understanding.

Social case analysis is autonomous among research methods. It stands on its own feet. It makes its contributions to knowledge in its own way.

Social case analysis starts from a pole of research opposite to that of quantitative analysis. It cannot be judged by quantitative standards any more than quantitative research can be judged by case analysis procedures. It seeks to understand the innermost reactions of persons as the main goal of research. It considers that quantitative research does not touch the essential social data, and in turn it is criticized as being weak in offering demonstrable proof of its findings.

Recognizing a possible serious weakness of case analysis when operating independently of quantitative research, some exponents of social case analysis are willing to accept a joint responsibility with quantification. They ask that statistics be first applied in order to find representative cases and then they will proceed in the characteristic way to make social case analyses. When they have finished their studies of representative cases they hold that their findings have substantial validity. Statistics may be used to locate cases for social analysis.

2. Sample Case Studies

Social movements furnish excellent materials for studying opinion-making as a social process. It took about seventy years for organized women in the United States to win a majority opinion for their cause. The victory was followed by a surprisingly quick subsidence of interest in the whole struggle. On the other hand, the prohibition movement, which also required about the same period of time before it achieved a recorded majority opinion, was followed by a revitalizing of a minority opinion that in about a dozen years overthrew the majority opinion which had been won after a fight of three-quarters of a century.

A. The origins of a public opinion favorable to woman's suffrage in the United States may be dated as of 1848, when the movement was officially inaugurated; and the ending of it, as 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment was passed and woman's suffrage was realized on a national scale.

For many years prior to 1848 the feminist movement had

been developing sporadically. Woman's rights in the abstract had secured attention, but in 1848 one of them, that of suffrage, was specifically denominated and a lively campaign for public favor was inaugurated. The publicity attendant upon the launching of the fight for woman's suffrage at the first woman's rights convention held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, aroused the opposition of men. The leaders of the suffrage cause were recognized as able women, but were considered, however, to be too few to develop a public opinion that would overthrow tradition.

The suffrage leaders exhibited relentless energy, but were slowed up by the Civil War only to receive new public opinion support in 1869 when they proclaimed that they had been insulted by the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment which gave Negro men the vote, while the white women of the nation who helped to get the vote for Negro men were denied the use of the polls. The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, which was a natural result of the outcome of the Civil War unintentionally threw an opinion-winning card into the hands of the women campaigners. In the same year when two leading American suffragettes were excluded from the floor of the international anti-slavery convention held in London, the suffrage movement in the United States received additional support from public opinion. In 1869 the National Woman Suffrage Association was formed to secure an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and also in 1869 the American Woman Suffrage Association was organized to obtain action by states. Each of these two developments aroused two separate but related currents of public opinion. In 1890 the two national women's suffrage organizations pooled their resources in one society, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and the two streams of public opinion were united into one broad, flowing current of public support. Public opinion was slowly developing in the direction of securing a national amendment. This opinion current was met by a counter opinion current, somewhat sullen and operating under cover to keep women from voting. The big financial interests who felt that their business methods would not pass ethical scrutiny were afraid of what the addition of millions of women voters to the voting population would do to them. They spent millions of dollars to keep United States

senators from ratifying the amendment and to keep state legislatures from approving it. Thus, they delayed favorable public opinion for years from achieving its goal. After the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the opposing opinions died down, for the antagonistic business interests discovered that women voters at the polls expressed themselves pretty much as men do.

In the foregoing statement involving an opinion-making process several important phases may be noted. (1) Women were aroused when their interest in political control was ignored by men, and a few especially courageous and able women challenged the age-old tradition which would keep them in the home and prevent them from exercising the ballot. These women set about to build a favorable public opinion for giving the vote to women. They inaugurated and maintained a widespread campaign, but for a time the strong individual leaders were somewhat divided regarding the main procedure to follow, but broadminded thought prevailed and the various militant groups were united in a single national organization. A favorable opinion within the states as well as within the nation as a whole was slowly built up. There was a concentration of effort in bringing public opinion to bear upon state and national legislators to support a national amendment.

(2) In the meantime an opposing public opinion was aroused chiefly by big financial interests who put forward the argument (to sidetrack attention from their main fears that women would vote against big business on ethical grounds) that if women left the home and entered politics they would be degraded and lose their prestige and influence. This opposing opinion fostered the idea that women could exercise far more power by their personal influence over their menfolk than by mixing in everyday affairs as voters. They could maintain dignity and status best, according to an extensive opposition opinion, by remaining aloof from politics and wielding their feminine charms over men. This line of thought claimed for itself all the merits of realism and practicality. It had money behind it, and it held to its guns tenaciously.

(3) The favorable opinion grew apace. The women leaders punctured the contentions of the men. Their earnestness, their promises of other reforms for the benefit of women, and their

persistence increased the pressure of a militant public opinion upon unwilling legislators until one by one the latter succumbed to the fear of losing their legislative heads (some did suffer defeat in defending the old order). The women who began the struggle in 1848 to obtain a favorable public opinion had all died before 1920, but they had aroused successors who picked up the cudgels where their seniors laid them down, and who carried on with renewed vigor and new life. All along the road to ultimate success the lives of the suffragettes were threatened, but they did not waver in their appeal for a public opinion that would compel a change in the traditions of the nation, that is, in the American way.

(4) Since the final decision brought no upsetting changes in national procedures, the opposition both died down and died out. The new way was generally accepted.

(5) The winners recognized the need for education of women in public affairs and on public issues, and so have maintained an organization to this end which, however, has never developed a strength equal to that of the presuffrage organizations. However, the League of Women Voters of the United States has been increasingly efficient in developing a constructive civic consciousness in the selection of public officials and in the voting on important public issues.

In the main this case study discloses first a disturbance of the traditions, then a favorable public opinion of increasing proportions and of persistent nature, and an unfavorable public opinion doggedly fighting to resist social change, a final decision, an end to the opinion-making process after a substantial change in political rules had been effected but without greatly influencing political and economic life, and a continuing, but very limited, program of educating the public.

B. A comparable opinion study may be made of the prohibition movement in the United States, which originated about the same time as the suffrage movement. It began in particular states as more or less a local matter with Maine passing the first permanent prohibition law in 1851. Favorable opinion secured laws in states such as Kansas in the '80's. Similar opinion developed in the South in order to keep liquor from Negroes.

In 1874 temperance opinion received a new impetus in the

organization of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The latter had an unusually able person as its leader in Frances E. Willard (president, 1879-1898). It carried on a two-fold program, seeking to win public support for its program against drinking liquor and for legislation banning the liquor traffic. Through appealing to church people particularly, the W.C.T.U. built up a strong public opinion against liquor.

In 1899 Carrie Nation began her crusade to destroy saloons, literally with her hatchet. Prohibition opinion in general did not approve, but national attention was awakened regarding the pros and cons of the liquor traffic and two currents of favorable and unfavorable public opinion definitely began to form.

In the meantime the Anti-Saloon League had been formed in Ohio in 1893. It worked in specific areas to secure public support for local option and then to obtain a vote in those areas to outlaw the liquor business. It built up in hundreds of places in the nation a strong opinion favoring prohibition. It went about the forming of public opinion in a business-like fashion, and drove ahead relentlessly. It aroused the liquor interests, who spent large sums of money in developing a strong counter current of public opinion. Its work and that of related groups came to a climax with the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919. After the Amendment was passed the League dropped out of the picture, erroneously concluding that since the battle had ended in a victory there was nothing more for the League to do.

World War I was a big aid to the successful culmination of the outlawry of liquor, for a strong opinion developed against the use of liquor by soldiers; it was claimed that liquor would put the lives of men at the mercy of their own intoxicated officers. The slogans that World War I was being fought to make the world safe for democracy and that it was a war to end war created a tide of idealism that aided the anti-liquor opinion.

The final culmination in 1919 was the result of a long-drawn-out and hard-fought battle between two strong bodies of public opinion. The public opinion favorable to prohibition was composed of a coalition of several minority opinions. There was (1) the feminist opinion. It was repeatedly emphasized that women (and children) are the chief victims of drunken husbands (and fathers). There was (2) the persistent opinion created by church

women banded together in the W.C.T.U. There were (3) sporadic outbursts of the Carrie Nation type whose chief contribution was that of calling attention to evils. There was (4) the opinion created by the valiant, hard-headed Anti-Saloon League with its effective technique of moving step by step, county by county.

The defending coalesced opinion came from (1) big business interests engaged in making, importing, and distributing liquor, and many subsidiary businesses built up as adjuncts to the liquor business. It came (2) from people of wealth who insisted on violating local prohibition laws and in having liquor at all costs. It came (3) from a considerable percentage of European immigrants who had become accustomed to the use of beer and wine as a part of their meals.

So far there was some similarity between the opinion-making process favoring woman suffrage that began about 1848 and ended in the passage of woman suffrage in 1920, and the prohibition opinion process which may be traced back to about 1850 and which came to its climax in 1919. The story of the former essentially ended in 1920. In itself it brought about no great social and economic changes, and the erstwhile perturbed opinion quickly accepted the verdict.

The prohibition movement was different. Great financial losses would be suffered by one part of the opposition, and deeply ingrained habits of drinking by millions would not be easily downed. Both sets of negative opinion continued on their way despite the laws of the land. A class known as bootleggers developed on the strength of this negative opinion in all large cities.

Bootlegging not only grew but it thrived on a public opinion created by the liquor interests. Emboldened by the rise of a favorable public opinion the liquor proponents put on a far-reaching propaganda campaign to the effect that the increasing crime rate was due to the lawlessness created by prohibition. Nearly all the liquor-drinking people could boast of their law-flaunting acts, because of a powerful supporting opinion.

On the other hand, the affirmative opinion decreased rapidly. It carried on almost no educational program to support the Eighteenth Amendment. It did not recognize that a dynamic

minority motivated by the love of money and by drinking habits would not automatically and overnight become law-abiding.

A general opinion, or *Zeitgeist*, arose to favor the liquor-supporting opinion. World War I was followed by a serious moral breakdown and also by a prosperity period of years that treated morals recklessly even to the point of widespread gambling and open boasting about it. When killing for a period of time is the aim of civilization, law-observation seems to depend on one's personal interests. When people can make big money hand over fist and can rake in the coin by a spin of the wheel, there is little searching of conscience. This was the general opinion on which a minority public opinion favorable to liquor thrived. It grew into a majority opinion and effected the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment by the passage of another Amendment. After the Eighteenth Amendment's passage, the people who had created the needed public opinion did not maintain continuous and thoroughgoing educational procedures. When there came an upsurge in opinion favoring liquor, there was no dynamic-enough opinion grounded in knowledge to offset it.

C. A short-term case study of the public opinion process may now be considered. The time-period in question is the duration of World War II and the theme centers around the evacuation of the Japanese and the Japanese Americans from the West Coast. The first-mentioned group numbered about 40,000 immigrants from Japan and the second was comprised of approximately 70,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry.¹ On December 7, 1941, there were two more or less dormant public opinions regarding this minority group, one being antagonistic and the other representing fair-play reactions.

After the attack of the Japanese air forces on Pearl Harbor the antagonistic public opinion was greatly activated by organized groups of Americans who for years had been engaged in building up an opinion against the Japanese immigrants, particularly in California, Oregon, and Washington. This antagonism was set aflame after December 7 by the spreading of many vivid rumors. According to one of these rumors the Japanese and Japanese Americans on the West Coast were all fifth col-

¹ In addition there were about 17,000 other Japanese and Japanese Americans living east of the West Coast states who were not involved in the Evacuation.

umnists and were lying in wait for a preconcerted signal from Tokyo at which they would rise up en masse and, with military aid from Japan, would blow up bridges, oil reservoirs, and assist in taking over the United States west of the Rocky Mountains for Japan. Another rumor claimed that the Japanese in Hawaii were committing sabotage, and that no Japanese or American of Japanese ancestry in the United States could be trusted—a rumor which after it had helped to develop considerable antagonistic feeling was later denied and was never substantiated.²

The phrase "Once a Jap, always a Jap" was bandied about freely by representatives of the antagonistic opinion and led to many distortions of established anthropological findings. For example, statements were made to the effect that race is biologically identified with disloyalty. Some persons went so far as to spread the proposal that all persons of Japanese origins should be sent back to Japan, even though thousands of them were American citizens in good standing. Since most of them had not seen Japan, obviously they could not be sent back to where they had never been. Some persons were roundly applauded when they proposed with vehemence that all Japanese immigrants, their wives, and their children should be put on old barges, taken out to the middle of the Pacific Ocean where the boats should be sunk.

The fair-play opinion developed slowly at first. It was never well organized. It had almost no funds and few if any full-time paid workers. Relying upon volunteer workers who had other work to do, it developed sporadically. It spread the idea that since the soldiers of the United States were fighting for the four freedoms in other lands, the people at home should give all citizens (including those of Japanese ancestry) fair treatment and not jump to what might turn out to be (and did) unwarranted public condemnation. It called public attention to the fact that in Hawaii where the people of Japanese names comprised about one-third of the total population it had not been deemed necessary to ship them away from the Islands. It reported that no sabotage rumors in either Hawaii or on the Mainland had been found to be correct. It disseminated the

² Bradford Smith, *Americans from Japan* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1948), Chapter XIII.

fact that the FBI and the Naval Intelligence representatives had been actively on the job and had arrested all Japanese leaders and Japanese American leaders who might be suspected of disloyalty or of committing sabotage and had sent them inland to internment camps and that those who remained were being watched closely.

The antagonistic current of opinion quickly became a raging torrent sweeping nearly all before it. Having economic backing from the start, it became irresistible when military authorities gave it their blessing. What was a regional current of opinion soon became first a national current and then a national policy. This policy set up a new American way, involving something that had not happened before in the United States, namely, the uprooting of thousands of Americans against whom no legal charges had been preferred and shipping them hundreds of miles, as a rule, to concentration camps where they were surrounded by barbed wire fences and guarded day and night by military police.

The antagonistic opinion gained the dominance over the fair-play opinion for a number of reasons. (1) It had had a longer history, and a more or less continuous program extending back over forty years. (2) It had far stronger economic support. (3) It was given a strong approval by the military. (4) It was based on rural reactions on the West Coast against the competition furnished by Japanese immigrants because of their industry and frugality (two virtues once praised by Benjamin Franklin). (5) The fear of treachery based on the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, led to a widespread opinion that no Japanese or American citizens of Japanese ancestry could be trusted (a contention that was later disproved by the heroic sacrifices and record of the Japanese Americans in the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442d Regimental Combat Team and the high praise accorded them by American military commanders.³ (6) War psychology and hysteria gave the antagonistic opinion a tremendous boost.

In 1944 and 1945 the turn in the fortunes of war worked against the antagonistic opinion. It was compelled to go on the defensive. When the Japanese army and navy began to suffer

³ *Ibid.*, Chapter I.

one serious defeat after another and the danger of an attack by a Japanese army on the West Coast decreased, the fair-play opinion began to gather strength. Many persons began to recognize how the antagonistic opinion had overplayed its hand, had resorted to rabble-rousing, had made sweeping and untrue generalizations, had exhibited blind hatred.

As Japan approached its final defeat, antagonistic opinion blew itself up in a new attempt to win public opinion support. It tried but in vain to secure approval of its plan to keep the Japanese and the American citizens of Japanese ancestry from returning to their former homes on the West Coast. This move aroused new fair-play support. It was so evident that selfish purposes animated it that it fell of its own weight. In the meantime, many persons who had been mildly antagonistic began to recognize how unjustly thousands of American citizens had been treated, and began to say so publicly. In fact, by the time the War had ended, fair-play opinion attained a new high. Many civic-minded leaders on the West Coast were publicly urging that something be done to redeem the American claim to being democratic in its treatment of its citizenry. Some were urging that the Japanese immigrants and the Japanese Americans be aided in their return to their uprooted homes in the Pacific Coast states. Some were asking the National Government to give these people financial compensation for their economic losses (later granted in a limited way by Congress). Others proposed that the United States offer the Japanese immigrants the opportunity of becoming citizens (still being considered by Congress five years after the War ended).

Interesting aspects of the public opinion process as found in this case study may be noted: (1) The rapidity with which the antagonistic current of opinion reached its climax and the extreme length to which it went in its major demand (for evacuation) which was successful. The chief explanatory factors were based on war psychology and military support. (2) The decision for evacuation which was made not by a public vote but by an unusually aggressive antagonistic opinion endorsed by military authorities. (3) The way in which propaganda originating in three Western states spread its influence throughout the nation and set up a new American way. (4) The underlying strength

of a fair-play opinion which became effective only when danger of foreign attack was over.

D. The Campaign for President in the United States in 1948 is an excellent short-term study in public opinion. In July all reports pointed to an overwhelming majority in favor of Governor Dewey. Four months later President Truman was elected by being given two million more votes than the "sure-winner" as predicted by most expert students of public opinion.

The process of public opinion followed the usual course even though the results were contrary to the predictions of the pollsters and columnists. President Truman set off a disturbance at the Democratic Convention in July when he threw down the gauntlet, not only to his chief opponent but to all the opponents and sceptics within his own Party. In September the campaign was under way with two partisan public opinions squaring off against each other. The President led the under-dog, uphill-fighting opinion with a campaign that made strong appeals to farmers, organized labor, veterans, Negroes, housewives, and other minority groups. Almost single-handed he carried the struggle for a favorable opinion to "the people," and when the decision was rendered on election day in November he had won by a plurality of votes.

The presumably majority opinion was represented by New York's successful Governor. He too traveled extensively. Earlier in the year he had "gone out West" to Oregon and in a "folksy" campaign had put the popular former Governor of Wisconsin, Harold Stassen, to rout in a contest for delegates to the Republican Convention, but in the Presidential Campaign he maintained an aloofness from grappling directly with public issues which may have turned popular opinion away from him to some extent.

In October the pollsters and other predictors of public opinion were in practical agreement that Dewey had won. Only Truman and close friends seemed sure that the President had a chance. Roper had ceased to poll the people, for he was sure that Dewey was far ahead. Gallup neglected to consider changes in public opinion that might occur in the last two weeks prior to election day.

On election night friend and foe of the President could not believe the reports in which Truman not only took a lead as soon as the first results were announced but which he maintained all through the night. By early morning Dewey had conceded the election. What had happened to swing public opinion from one candidate to the other in three months? Why did the pollsters miss the correct prediction so badly? Why did even leading Democrats see no turn in the tide? No one reason gives the answer. Many factors are involved in this unexpected change in public opinion.

After the election a Republican commentator said: "Let's admit that against great odds Mr. Truman won an extraordinary victory and made monkeys of all the columnists, editorial prophets, poll takers, political logicians, and 'trained' observers in the country."⁴ And then, more significantly still, Mr. Kent added: "Let's admit that he is the only Presidential candidate to achieve the unprecedented political miracle and create the unsuspected 'ground swell.' " It is this unsuspected ground swell of public opinion which is highly significant. After the election, an editorial writer in *Life* stated that President Truman "was closer to public opinion than anyone realized."⁵ He was closer to public opinion than the experts suspected because he was creating a ground swell of public opinion that measurement techniques failed to record.

To much the same degree that prior to the election people were sure that Dewey would be "the next president," people after the election were certain that Truman was the central figure in turning the tide of public opinion and of producing the effective ground swell of public opinion. He "caught the nation's fancy" says his press secretary.⁶ Of five explanatory factors cited by Frank R. Kent, first place is given to the possibility that Truman's success was due "to the appealing personality of an inherently decent man, unaided and alone gallantly fighting on when even his closest friends felt that there was no chance."⁷

There is little question but that President Truman's personal courage appealed sufficiently to a significant percentage of votes

⁴ Frank R. Kent, *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1948.

⁵ *Life*, 25:37, November 15, 1948.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, *loc. cit.*

to turn the election in his favor. His courage was exhibited against odds that would have completely overcome a less daring spirit. His press secretary says: "If he had any doubts about winning, he kept them to himself. He inspired us all to believe that he would win."⁸ As the campaign moved on and the predictions against him continued to pile up, his courage did not falter. His personal stamina stood out all the stronger against a doubting and deserting background of Democratic Party leaders.

The question has been raised many times: How did the assurance of the pollsters that Dewey would win affect public opinion? Undoubtedly many Republicans who took a Dewey victory for granted did not work to secure votes. Also, many Democrats took a Dewey victory for granted and hence did not work to obtain votes for Truman. One result, as far as public opinion was concerned, may have just about offset the other.

The 1948 presidential election showed up the weakness of the bandwagon technique. In other words, in this instance at least public opinion swung against the widely proclaimed bandwagon probability.

President Truman's method of taking his message to the people won him a favorable opinion. He made direct and specific appeals, appeals of man to man, appeals in terms of the vital interests of the persons to whom he was speaking. He identified the interests of the people to whom he spoke with those of his own as the chief executive of the nation.

The President made positive proposals where the people's needs were greatest, namely, in connection with the interests of labor, of the farms, of the veteran seeking more reasonable housing, of the housewife seeking to keep household expenses from rising still higher, and of aggravated minority groups seeking freedom from discrimination. The election indicated that public opinion is influenced by the people's occupational and economic interests, whether they be big business men, tenant farmers, young married veterans, humble housewives, or even irritated ethnic group members. Each of these groups tends to vote for the political party that seems to have the most to offer it. Group interests and opinion tend to rule elections. Victory is the sum total of a number of group opinions. The minority

⁸ Charles G. Ross, *Colliers*, 122:87, December 25, 1948.

group opinions favoring Truman added up to 2,000,000 more votes than did the minority group opinions favoring Dewey.

Possibly the subtlest of all the explanatory factors that explained the surprising turn of public opinion on November 2, 1948, was of a hidden nature. It was that ground swell of opinion that most of the experts failed to detect. It was found in what were listed in the polls "Don't know" votes. It appears that a large percentage of these plumped their votes for Truman on the basis of last minute decisions.⁹

The person who few thought could be elected president under all the circumstances collected a plurality public opinion because (1) of his personal courage in making an almost singlehanded bid for public support and (2) of the let-down in the opposition's efforts due to over-confidence. He won (3) through direct appeal to the favorable opinion of the "little people" in the highways and byways of American life. Thus, a presumably majority opinion of grand proportions for his chief opponent in July was overcome on decision day in November through the pooling of several minority group opinions. Again, the public opinion process, modified in some particulars, was well illustrated. It ran the course of disturbance, the rise of two contrary opinions, propaganda procedures by both sets of opinion-makers, the crescendo, and the decision. Instead of a slowly-mounting minority opinion, as in the cases particularly of the suffrage movement and the prohibition movement, there was a sudden spurt centering in one person of minority opinions which almost overnight became a majority opinion.

In the case of the suffrage movement unique features were the split in the mounting minority opinion which was breached before final victory came, and the fact that the process extended over two or three generations of leaders. In the prohibition movement a majority opinion was aided by a war situation and on the other hand it was lost by a failure to follow up with an adequate educational program. In the anti-Japanese movement a majority opinion developed rapidly as an aspect of a war spirit which in turn kept minority opinions from acquiring immediate effectiveness. When the war spirit passed the opinion tide

⁹ John G. Peatman, "DK's for Truman," *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research*, 2:537-542.

was turned and minority opinions came into their own. In all four cases discussed in this chapter the process and change elements in public opinion expressions are evident, but in specialized ways.

3. Significance of Case Studies

The case analysis method is complex when it involves the study of a social process. As such it necessarily includes historical materials, for considerable time is needed before the public opinion process can run its course. In each of the first two examples considered in the foregoing sections three-fourths of a century was involved.

A case analysis of public opinion is dualistic, for it consists of examining two opinion-making forces with each being in continuous interaction with the other. It covers all the changes of both an affirmative opinion and a negative opinion in continuous interaction.

A case analysis of public opinion is complex also because it refers to so many different kinds of people, together with all the tie-ups and the clashes between them. There is a constant interplay of personal opinions which never is recorded anywhere but which explains some of the changes in public opinion.

This type of case analysis has to develop its own methods, supplementing what may be learned from case study techniques that have been developed in other social science fields. The public opinion process in the matter of time, of numbers of people, and of unrecorded interplay of personal opinion with personal opinion and of affirmative with negative reactions calls for research by many persons working simultaneously and co-operatively. No one person can handle all the phases with equal facility.

Despite the difficulties, case analyses of public opinion have much to commend them to the members of discussion groups. They throw light on the nature of social process in general. They constitute one of the most comprehensive research undertakings yet espoused in the fields of social psychology and sociology. They tackle a larger "gestalt" than do most research projects.

The case analysis method makes contributions at the point where quantitative methods of opinion measurement are weak

or inadequate. At many points its procedures are complementary to statistical techniques. The two approaches have little in common and hence their findings, when based on a study of the same social situation, may be checked advantageously against each other. Taken together the results add up to more than either method by itself can contribute.

The case analysis method of studying public opinion goes much deeper than does the measurement method in considering the nature of public opinion. Measurement procedures are confined largely to studies of personal opinion, or else they see public opinion as merely the addition of personal opinions, which hardly does justice to public opinion seen as a process of interacting opinion and running a gamut of stages and trends, reaching a decision or a goal, and eventuating in changes in the folkways and mores.

Little attempt has been made to use the two methods jointly in studying the same opinion-making process. The future looms large when the two approaches can be centered upon the same aspects of public opinion.

When more case analysis studies have been made of public opinion phenomena, it may be possible to develop principles of procedure. At least the method can be defined more clearly than now in its characteristic techniques. Then techniques can be refined and be made usable by a considerable number of bonafide investigators.

It is probable that case analyses of public opinion will utilize life histories of the leaders of public opinion. The personal opinions and attitudes that are involved will give new insight into the nature of public opinion. Moreover, case analyses will be perfected and they together with the findings of measurement studies will add greatly to the knowledge of the nature and operation of public opinion.

Part V

Conclusions

CHAPTER XV

Conclusions About Opinion Making

IN ANY STUDY of public opinion it quickly becomes evident that what is called public opinion is the result of a number of interacting factors and forces. It becomes clear that not only the end result, namely, public opinion, is important, but that the process by which public opinion is made is equally if not more significant. In studying this process, especially through case studies of opinion making, certain sequences repeat themselves.

1. Sequences in Opinion Making

The sequences in opinion making might be called "laws" of public opinion. Perhaps it would be better at this stage of research in this field to call these sequences generalizations, or conclusions. Whether they are called laws, generalizations, or conclusions does not matter too much if it is understood that they represent tentative findings or even hypotheses that are subject to further investigation.

The term, "principles of public opinion," has been used by Doob.¹ By principles he means "the conditions under which one or more of the characteristics" of public opinion are demonstrated. However, Doob states that it is "premature to hazard a set of principles or 'laws' "; on the other hand, Cantril goes so far as to phrase seventeen "laws of public opinion."² He uses the term laws in the sense of generalizations that are drawn from a study of trends. His seventeen principles are described by Doob as serving "as the serious prototype of the literary or loosely impressionistic description."³

¹ Lawrence W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1948), pp. 87-89.

² Hadley Cantril, *Gauging Public Opinion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), pp. 226 ff.

³ Doob, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

By way of illustration, the first three of Cantril's seventeen "laws of public opinion" may be noted:

- a. Opinion is highly sensitive to important events.
- b. Events of unusual magnitude are likely to swing public opinion temporarily from one extreme to another. Opinion does not become stabilized until the implications of events are seen with some perspective.
- c. Opinion is generally determined more by events than by words—unless those words are themselves interpreted as an "event."⁴

Probably generalizations is a more appropriate term to use for these statements than either laws or principles.

Generalized sequences are nothing new in social psychology. About 1890 Gabriel Tarde, a French magistrate led off at the close of the nineteenth century with a discussion of *The Laws of Imitation*.⁵ In it he developed a number of generalizations concerning the ways in which persons copy the behavior of other persons. Professor Edward A. Ross in 1908 in his *Social Psychology*⁶ went further than Tarde and worked out generalizations regarding fashion imitation, custom imitation, conventional behavior, suggestibility, and conflict.

In his book on *The Laws of Social Psychology*,⁷ Professor Florian Znaniecki discussed laws in the social sciences in relation to laws in the physical sciences. In the social science field he follows Charles A. Ellwood's statement⁸ that a law merely indicates "a relatively uniform and regular way in which things happen," or "regularity in an observed phenomenon," or "a habitual mode of action of individuals or groups among them."

Pursuing the discussion further Znaniecki concludes that if psychological laws relate to empirical uniformity they define

⁴ Cantril, *loc. cit.*

⁵ Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1905).

⁶ Edward A. Ross, *Social Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908).

⁷ Florian Znaniecki, *The Laws of Social Psychology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1925).

⁸ Charles A. Ellwood's *Sociology in its Psychological Aspects* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912).

certain facts, whereas "the laws of physical science define certain relations between facts."⁹ He adds that possibly a psychological law of uniformity "defines a process in its totality," but even so a physical law may go further and define "the connection between the parts of the process." A principle in social psychology is a fundamental explanation of a law in the sense of a recurring sequence of related aspects of social behavior.

Static laws refer to "unchanging relations between the parts of a whole."¹⁰ Laws of finality are those which reach beyond a statement of a certain sequence in the happening of events and explain the nature of the events. Laws of motivation analyze what motives cause always and everywhere the same psychological effects.¹¹ But such a search faces the criticism that acts cannot always be "explained by motives or predicted from motives," and hence it is difficult to state reliable laws of motivation.¹²

Quantitative laws face difficulties in the social field. Malthus found it necessary to qualify his first statement that population increases by geometrical progression while food increases by arithmetical progression. Tarde was in a similar predicament when he declared that "impulsive social action tends to extend and to intensify in geometrical progression." He saved himself by saying "tends to," but even so "the geometrical progression" is too exact.

A law of opinion-making can be little more at present than an empirical uniformity. It is still a series of generalized sequences, or a description of uniformity in the way in which events of a given type occur. It aims to be a universal, but must provide for exceptions because of the great number of variables in social life and because any new event is likely to develop new factors. It not only describes events but may also indicate some of the sequential relationships between events. If the sequence is clearly evident, then something like a process may obtain, and perhaps the statement of a social law may be attempted. In every case, however, a qualification must be made to allow for the appearance of an undiscovered variable, or for the emer-

⁹ Znaniecki, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹² Felix Kaufman, *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), Chapter XIII.

gence of an entirely new factor resulting from current social interaction. Laws in social science had best be considered as hypotheses to be tested by further experimentation than as established and invariable findings.

2. *Tentative Laws of Opinion Making*

The following statements are descriptions of sequences of the events involved in opinion making. They are merely sample suggestions. Each one is to be regarded as a hypothesis to be tested by measurement, case analysis, or controlled experimentation. Sample generalizations will be made for each of the main sub-topics of public opinion as given in this treatise. In each statement the phrase, "other things being equal," may be added.

a. *What is Public Opinion?* (1) Majority opinion is always accompanied by one or more minority opinions.

(2) The more that consensus can be developed freely, the greater the degree of democracy that will be achieved.

(3) The more that an opinion is galvanized by feeling, the more likely is it to be expressed in action.

(4) To the degree that public opinion becomes expressed only in a number of minority opinions, to that degree is democracy in danger.

b. *What Public Opinion Can Do.* (1) To the extent that public opinion brings the mores under wider rational scrutiny, the more likely it is that they will be redefined.

(2) When flagrant violations of the mores result in a widespread catastrophe, public opinion demands the cessation of the violation.

(3) To the degree that public opinion is constructive, to that extent does it strengthen group morale.

(4) Negative public opinion holds a direct relation to the lowering of morale.

(5) The more that public opinion is suppressed, the more violent the ultimate reaction.

c. *Personal Conversation.* (1) To the degree that gossip plays a role in a public opinion process, to that degree will the process undermine social welfare.

(2) The greater the role of ballyhoo in a public opinion campaign, the less the social value of the results.

(3) The more complicated and technical the language of a proposition to be voted upon, the more confused will it make the voting public.

(4) As talk becomes extreme, partisan, the less the possibility of needed compromise.

d. *Reading Newspapers.* (1) As news coloration increases, the less the opportunity for the free formation of public opinion.

(2) As the cost of operating a newspaper mounts into the millions of dollars, the chances of a free formation of public opinion decrease.

(3) The greater the national control of the press, the greater the likelihood of bureaucratic domination of public opinion.

(4) The more a newspaper resorts to the use of scare headlines and the printing of scandal, the more it confuses opinion-making.

e. *Seeing Motion Pictures.* (1) The more subtle the artistry of the motion picture, the greater the influence of the film for either public good or public harm.

(2) Hyper-anything in pictures hinders the formation of sound judgments by public opinion.

(3) Since public opinion is highly responsive to appeals to the feelings, the responsibility of motion pictures with their feeling appeals is correspondingly great.

(4) The more closely that censorship of motion pictures is expressed at the source of their production, the more effective it becomes.

f. *Listening to the Radio.* (1) The wider the use of the radio, the easier is the arousal of a nationwide mob psychology.

(2) The radio is more effective in solidifying opinion than in creating it.

(3) The rise of hyper-anything in radio is accompanied *pari passu* by a decline in a public desire for careful and accurate opinions.

(4) The development of internationalism in radio programs bears a direct relation to the formation of a common world culture.

g. *Reacting to Education.* (1) The more skillful the build-up, the greater the results of publicity.

(2) The influence of dissemination of facts varies according to the degree of wishful thinking of those who receive the facts.

(3) The younger the subjects of indoctrination, the freer their responses.

(4) As the number of similarly worded letters to a legislator increase, their curve of influence falls.

h. *Participating in Discussion Groups.* (1) The greater the percentage of a population who participate in discussion groups, the greater will be the development of democracy.

(2) The more regularly that people participate in discussion groups, the greater will be the development of democracy.

(3) As a discussion group grows in number of members, the less democratic the opinion-making process.

(4) The more a university develops the discussion type of classrooms, the more effective will its teaching program become.

(5) The greater the extent to which a people consider their problems via the discussion group method, the less the aid that they will need from other sources.

(6) The greater the preparation given a topic beforehand by all the members of a discussion group, the greater the results.

(7) The more one member of a discussion group monopolizes the discussion, the less significant will be the results.

(8) The more the subject matter that is considered by a discussion group pertains to an action program, the greater will be the interest of the members.

(9) The more that a discussion group is developed in terms of a workshop, the more efficient will be the results.

i. *The Opinion-Making Process.* (1) Every major public opinion runs a time and place course, manifests stages in a dualistic conflict, reaches a decision, and subsides.

(2) Every public opinion process involves continual interaction between affirmative and negative currents of ideas and feelings.

(3) At any point in a public opinion conflict the process is likely to change its direction as a result of the interaction between the affirmative and negative currents of opinion.

(4) As a hard-fought opinion-making process approaches a decision, the greater the likelihood of heated incriminations.

(5) To the extent that discussion in a public opinion process attains the level of scientific consensus, to that extent are the results likely to be generally beneficial.

(6) A major public opinion process is followed by a redefinition of the folkways and sometimes of the mores.

j. *General Weaknesses.* (1) To the extent that one side in a public opinion conflict can pose as a defender of the mores, to that degree does it possess an advantage.

(2) When two strong sections of a social group maintain two conflicting sets of mores of equal strength, a public opinion conflict between them tends to result in a draw.

(3) Superficial changes in the folkways and mores tend to quiet a public opinion conflict but not to stop it.

(4) The more bitter a public opinion conflict, the less likely is either side to reexamine or to change its mores.

(5) When two publics are in conflict, the public with the more effective organization has the greater chance of winning.

(6) To the degree that some experts testify for and others against a proposition, the more confused public opinion becomes.

(7) The more that a war spirit rises, the less rational does public opinion become.

(8) To the degree that peace lulls a people to sleep, the more likely that public opinion will lag behind public need.

(9) The less a social issue affects the personal or group interests of numbers of people, the less the chances of developing a strong public opinion in favor of it.

(10) To the extent that the mores of various nations differ, to that degree is the growth of a world public opinion hindered.

k. *Propaganda Distortions.* (1) The greater the convictions of a group, the more responsive is the group to propaganda in line with these convictions.

(2) As the artistry of propaganda develops, the more easily does it secure acceptance.

(3) The more secret the sources of propaganda, the greater its dangers to the general welfare.

(4) Insinuation and propaganda bear a direct relation to each other as factors in misleading public opinion.

(5) As the cost of a propaganda campaign increases, the less the counteracting influence of the average democratically minded person.

(6) The rise of totalitarianism is accompanied by an even greater rise of nationally controlled propaganda.

l. *Censorship Barriers.* (1) When censorship increases, personal freedom declines.

(2) When a group crisis impends, censorship tightens.

(3) The imminence of enemies of a group from without, multiplies censorship regulation within the group.

(4) The exercise of censorship and the exercise of propaganda hold a direct relationship to each other.

(5) The greater the directness of censorship in a democracy, the more definite the reactions against it.

m. *Polls and Scales.* (1) To the degree that personal opinions can be measured, to that extent can public opinion be understood.

(2) To the extent that a graduated scale of voting can be devised allowing for spread of opinion and for intensity of feeling, to that degree it will be possible to understand public opinion.

(3) To the extent that public issues become specific, can public opinion regarding them be measured.

n. *Case Analysis Study.* (1) The more representative a case analysis of public opinion, the more significant are the results of its analysis.

(2) To the degree that a case analysis of public opinion presents the underlying configurations of conflicting personalities, the more significant will be its findings.

(3) To the degree that a case analysis of public opinion runs a historical gamut, to that extent will the process of opinion-formation become evident.

o. *Conclusions.* (1) The more scientific the devices for measuring personal opinion, the greater the accuracy in formulating laws of public opinion.

(2) The greater the number and variety of intensive case analyses of public opinion, the greater the possibility of framing reliable laws regarding the public opinion process.

(3) The more definitely that measurement experts and case analysis experts collaborate in the study of public opinion, the more significant will be the results.

(4) The more unstructured is public thinking, the more likely will it be swayed.¹³

(5) Public opinion is influenced more at a given time by catastrophic events than by any other factor.

(6) Public opinion is influenced more in the long run by the self-interests of people than by any other factor.

(7) Leadership plays a larger role in forming public opinion in a democracy during a crisis than at other times.

(8) Public opinion is more easily formed regarding goals than methods.

In the foregoing chapters public opinion has been seen to be a comprehensive human relations phenomenon. It has power and it has weaknesses. It has many dimensions or aspects. (1) Public opinion has length; it continues until its aims are achieved or it is sidetracked. (2) It has direction; it is pointed now this way, now that, but always somewhere. (3) It has goals, which sometimes explain its length and always its aims and its direction. (4) It has breadth or scope, representing the influences of a few or of the multitude, and sweeping a narrow or a wide path. (5) It has intensity. Sometimes it may be namby-pamby and again it overwhelms all that it overtakes. It may express conquering convictions. (6) It may have structures or relative permanence, and contribute a residue of behavior patterns to the folkways and perhaps to the more effective mores. (7) It has a processual nature, with trends and stages, with dynamic elements of change in its make-up, and with lasting meanings for mankind.

¹³ Statements (4) to (8) are based on Hadley Cantril's seventeen "generalizations or laws that can be made with respect to public opinion in a democracy," *Gauging Public Opinion, op. cit.*, pp. 226 ff.

Appendix

A. PROBLEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Chapter I: *What Is Public Opinion?*

1. Do you agree with the statement: "The range of questions on which the public is incapable of forming an intelligent opinion is rapidly increasing"?
2. In what different senses is the term "public" used?
3. What is the main difference between an opinion and an attitude?
4. How is private opinion different from personal opinion?
5. When is there much private opinion but no public opinion?
6. How does a person's social class affect the origins of his personal opinions?
7. How is the popular usage of "public opinion" different from the scientific meaning?
8. What does the term "majority opinion" imply?
9. Why may public opinion include a majority opinion and several minority opinions?
10. When does a consensus arise?
11. Wherein lies the superiority of a consensus?
12. How does the importance of public opinion today in the world compare with its strength, for example, in the year 1800?

Chapter II. *What Public Opinion Can Do*

1. How does public opinion restrain behavior?
2. In what way does public opinion stimulate behavior?
3. What is meant by public-opinion-made morality?
4. What is the relation between personal status and group opinion?
5. Which is a more important social force, law or public opinion?
6. When is a bare majority opinion adequate for the enforcement of law?
7. Does the law have a scientific foundation if it is based on public opinion?
8. How does public opinion redefine the mores?

9. If there are mores which are nondiscussable and not subject to the influence of public opinion, how are changes effected in them?
10. When is the immediacy characteristic of public opinion helpful to society?
11. How does public opinion operate in an *a priori* way?
12. What is the highest function of public opinion as a social control agency?

Chapter III: *Personal Conversation*

1. What is talk?
2. Why is there so much talk?
3. Why may casual conversation be very important?
4. Why is table talk significant?
5. Give an original illustration of organized conversation.
6. Define gossip.
7. Give an example of gossip that you have heard.
8. Why is gossip so omniactive?
9. Why is a whispering campaign deadly?
10. When does it break down?

Chapter IV: *Reading Newspapers*

1. Why does each newspaper have a public of its own?
2. Compare the publics of any two newspapers that you know.
3. What are the strong points of the newspaper in forming opinion?
4. What are the weak points?
5. What types of people are most influenced by what they read in any particular newspaper?
6. Illustrate slanting of the news.
7. Is there a difference between slanting the news and coloration of the news?
8. How can the problem of the coloration of the news be overcome?
9. Compare the editorial and the columnist in their respective influence on readers.
10. If a newspaper gave a column daily to each political party, would the readers be better able than now to think clearly on political questions?
11. Wherein lies the influence of the cartoon?

12. If newspaper influence on elections is weak why do candidates "cringe at the thought of editorial attack"?
13. Would a "municipal newspaper" be desirable?
14. How would you improve the newspaper as a means of helping people to form opinions correctly?
15. What is a weakness of the weekly journals of opinion?
16. Why are some works of fiction especially effective in opinion-formation?
17. Compare and contrast any two books dealing with public opinion.

Chapter V: *Seeing Motion Pictures*

1. Wherein lies the strength of the motion picture in opinion-making?
2. Explain Albig's statement that "American films become evangelical for a way of life."
3. How have films been "a great distorting medium"? (Albig)
4. What stereotypes have motion pictures produced?
5. How does the speed of motion picture film affect the thought processes?
6. Cite a case of the newsreel being used as propaganda.
7. How have American films given distorted notions in foreign countries of American life? (Graves)
8. Can you give an illustration of how a motion picture has influenced your own opinion?
9. Can you give a concrete illustration of "sleeper effects" of a motion picture?
10. What needs to be done in order to improve the influence of motion pictures on public opinion?
11. Explain the significance: "The most intelligent part of an audience, the most critical, is the least demonstrative."
12. With what success has the motion picture industry attempted to meet an adverse public opinion?

Chapter VI: *Listening to the Radio*

1. Explain: "The radio is the most important instrument for mass communication since the invention and development of printing."
2. What are the limits of broadcasting in political campaigns?

3. Why has commercial broadcasting "had no incentive to provide a gradually rising standard of programs"?
4. Which is more important in influencing public opinion, the radio or the newspaper?
5. What is the greatest weakness of public ownership of the radio?
6. Is the radio to be classed as a public utility?
7. Is nationalism justified in preventing citizens from listening to programs from other countries?
8. Under what conditions would it be wise to permit free radio communication between nations?
9. Is the social control of the radio more vital than of the newspaper?
10. What is most noteworthy about the radio listening habits of people?

Chapter VII: *Reacting to Education*

1. How is education in its broadest meaning different from education in its most specific sense?
2. What is the connection between publicity and public?
3. What is the main function of publicity?
4. Illustrate "build-up."
5. What is the purpose of "build-up"?
6. How do you go about starting a "build-up"?
7. What is the origin of the term "public relations"?
8. What is the highest aim of public relations, and why is it so difficult to achieve?
9. How far is public school education a process of indoctrinating?
10. When is indoctrinating socially justifiable?
11. Describe some of the characteristics of an indoctrinator.
12. How far can a democratic society afford to disseminate ideas freely?
13. Distinguish between teaching and educating.
14. Why is the educating process in its most advanced form more difficult than teaching?

Chapter VIII: *Participating in Discussion Groups*

1. Explain: "Public opinion is normally arrived at after discussion."
2. When is discussion democratic and when not?
3. Of what informal discussion groups are you a member?

4. Why is the New England town meeting of over a century ago still referred to so favorably?
5. Why did the New England town meeting lose some of its democratic functions?
6. Why does the need for discussion groups increase as the size of a community increases?
7. What was Bishop Grundtvig's contribution to the discussion group movement? Why was it so important?
8. What is especially significant about the correspondence study groups in Sweden?
9. What was the most important element in the discussion group movement in Eastern Nova Scotia?
10. What plan can you suggest for a widespread extension of the discussion group method?
11. Why do committee meetings often fail as discussion groups?
12. What is a common shortcoming of round tables?
13. Why may a panel discussion fall short of the best type of discussion group?
14. How can group dynamics contribute to the efficiency of group discussion?

Chapter IX: *The Opinion-Making Process*

1. What is a process?
2. Why is public opinion a process?
3. What are the two major aggravating factors which inaugurate the public opinion process?
4. Is partisanship always a part of the public opinion process?
5. What are the valuable phases of partisanship?
6. Is propaganda necessary to the public opinion process?
7. What are the socially undesirable phases of argumentation?
8. What percentage of a group usually change their attitudes during an election campaign?
9. What factors are most effective in getting persons to change their opinions?
10. Under what conditions do you change your opinion?
11. In what ways may a decision take place?
12. What factors are involved in redefinition?
13. What part of the public opinion process is usually meant by the term "public opinion"?
14. Why may public opinion be likened to a drama or a play?

Chapter X: *General Weaknesses*

1. Illustrate the fitfulness of public opinion.
2. Why is public opinion fitful?
3. Illustrate the fickleness of public opinion.
4. Why is public opinion fickle?
5. How is public opinion weak in times of public excitement?
6. How is public opinion weak in quiet times?
7. How can public opinion become more scientific than at present?
8. Can public opinion be codified?
9. How do the deadlocks in Congress often reflect public opinion?
10. Explain: "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the votes."
11. Why do experts so often fail to clarify public opinion?
12. If the public cannot rely on experts for clarity of opinion, what can it do?
13. Why is a dictator limited in his control over public opinion?
14. How can public opinion have freedom in wartime?
15. Can a modern dictatorship suppress public opinion entirely?
16. How do special interests take advantage of public opinion in peacetime in a democracy?
17. Can we have public opinion without democracy?
18. Explain: "The public's interest in crime is not primarily in its suppression."
19. Has a national public ever fought a war in which it voted to do so? Why?

Chapter XI: *Propaganda Distortions*

1. What is propaganda?
2. Why has its growth been so great in recent years?
3. Is propaganda ever justifiable?
4. When is propaganda especially dangerous?
5. Explain: "Modern authoritarian rulers are not despots, they are mass creations."
6. Distinguish between unintentional and intentional propaganda. (Doob)
7. Why is concealing the source a favorite device of propagandists?
8. Explain: "Propaganda strives for the closed mind rather than the open mind."
9. What is the three-fold aim of war propaganda?
10. Explain: "The most notorious of the propaganda attempts by

business groups have been the propaganda campaigns of the utility companies." (Albig)

11. What is meant by "the art of propaganda"? (Albig)
12. What is the "red-herring" technique?
13. Explain: "The common man is at a disadvantage because propaganda costs money."
14. What is meant by "the propaganda menace"? (Lumley)

Chapter XII: *Censorship Barriers*

1. Define censorship.
2. What fields of life are least subject to censorship?
3. Why was the First Amendment passed, which reads that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech or of the press"?
4. How is freedom of speech sometimes abused?
5. How is freedom of the press abused?
6. What are the qualifications of an adequate public censor?
7. Why are people who exercise censorship in favor of it, but those who are censored, unfavorable?
8. How far is censorship a characteristic of every person's own mental processes?
9. What did Freud mean by the "censor"?
10. Give an example of informal censorship in social life.
11. Explain: "An informal, extralegal censorship of books is always operative."
12. What is the function of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*?
13. What is a principal result of the censorship of books?
14. Has the state the absolute right of censorship?
15. Indicate three standards or rules for a general censorship policy regarding any phase of life.
16. How is an adequate definition of public interests essential to a sound censorship policy?

Chapter XIII: *Polls and Scales*

1. Which is easier to measure, opinion or attitude? Why?
2. What are the weaknesses in secret voting as a criterion of opinion?
3. Why is the measurement of public opinion difficult?
4. What is the preferential ballot method, and its strong and weak points as a measuring rod of public opinion?

5. Why should the opinion of persons be weighed according to intensity of conviction?
6. What is meant by "opinion spread"?
7. What is the relation of case studies to measurement studies of public opinion?
8. How do you evaluate Bobbitt's proposed measurement of opinion?
9. What is the significance of Binnewies' procedure?
10. What is the importance of the Thurstone Scale?
11. What improvements can you suggest on the Gallup Poll methods?
12. What is the main difference between a poll and a scale?
13. How would you go about constructing a scale for measuring public opinion?
14. Why are classes in schools rarely considered discussion groups?
15. Why is the discussion group unusually effective as an opinion-making instrument?

Chapter XIV: *Case Studies of Public Opinion*

1. What is a case analysis study?
2. For what reason did the case analysis study method originate?
3. What is its major shortcoming?
4. Is public opinion a fruitful field for making case analysis studies?
5. What does the "Tom O'Leary" case in Murphy and Likert (Chapter II) show?
6. What does the case method in law contribute to method in studying public opinion?
7. What does case method in social work likewise contribute?
8. What are some of the requirements for a satisfactory "case" in public opinion?
9. Under what conditions can a comparative study be made of public opinion cases?
10. What is the main pitfall to be avoided in making a public opinion case analysis?

Chapter XV: *Conclusions about Opinion Making*

1. What would be the essentials of a law of public opinion?
2. How far is a law in social psychology more than a generalization?

3. If public opinion is older than written laws, why is its formulation into laws so backward?
4. What is needful in making feasible the formulation of "laws" of public opinion?
5. Formulate a "law" of public opinion that you have observed in operation.
6. How would you go about testing the validity of a tentative "law" of public opinion?
7. Indicate a research problem in public opinion that has come to your attention.
8. How do "laws" in public opinion constitute a review and a summary of the field?
9. Which of the tentative "laws" of public opinion given in Chapter XV do you consider the most reliable?
10. In what ways does your study of public opinion affect your attitude toward public opinion?

B. SELECTED READINGS

The accompanying reading lists are arranged in order of the topics of the respective chapters. They represent selected readings that supplement the materials that are given in each of the preceding chapters.

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Index

- Advertising, 101 ff.
- Advisory councils, 113
- Agencies, social, 20 ff.
- Alexander, H. B., 254
- Albig, William, 4, 60, 75, 87, 145, 153, 157, 167, 246
- Allen, Avery, 99
- Allport, F. H., 257, 260
- Allport, Gordon W., 38, 39, 248, 251
- Angell, Norman, 47, 246
- Animated cartoons, 71
- Anti-Japanese movement, 212 ff.
- Anti-Saloon League, 210
- Argentina, 190
- Athearn, Clarence, 119, 253
- Attitude scales, 197 ff.

- Bagehot, Walter, 34, 248
- Ballyhoo, 155
- Bandwagon technique, 151
- Benn, E. J. P., 254
- Berg, Charles, 36
- Bernard, L. L., 252
- Bernays, Edward L. 246, 254
- Biddle, W. W., 255
- Billboards, 101
- Binnewies, W. G., 200, 258
- Bird, Charles, 255
- Blumer, Herbert, 5, 64, 66, 191
- Bobbitt, Joseph M. 195
- Bogardus, E. S., 118, 121, 142, 191, 196, 201
- Bonaparte, C. J., 247
- Bowerman, George F., 116
- Bowman, LeRoy E., 114, 253
- British Broadcasting Corporation, 90
- Bryce, James, 124
- Bulman, David, 53, 79
- Burke, Edmund, 158

- Caldwell, F. V., 93
- Campaign speeches, 81
- Cantril, Hadley, 25, 87, 188, 225, 231, 251

- Card stacking, 151
- Caricature, 54
- Cartoons, 53 ff.
- Cartoons, animated, 71
- Case method in law, 205
- Case studies of public opinion, 204 ff.
- Casual conversation, 32 ff.
- Censor, the, 170
- Censorship, 168 ff.
- Change, social, 132
- Chapin, F. Stuart, 202
- Charters, W. W., 66
- Chase, Stuart, 252, 255
- Childs, Harwood L., 5, 7, 60, 100, 124, 156, 166, 168, 246, 248
- Clark, C. D., 246
- Clarke, Edwin L., 252
- Coady, M. M., 112
- Coalition opinion, 13 ff.
- Coate, L. H., 251
- Coloration of news, 48 ff.
- Columnists, 52
- Committee meetings, 197
- Communication, 8
- Consensus opinion, 13 ff.
- Consumer cooperatives, 196
- Conversation, 31 ff.
- Cooley, Charles H., 6, 45, 46, 125, 126, 254, 257
- Cooperative consumer, the, 117
- Cooperative League of U.S.A., 89
- Coolidge, Calvin, 153
- Creel, George, 254
- Crespi, L. P., 258
- Crowd psychology, 140
- Councils, advisory, 113
- Customs, 22

- Democracy, 5, 26, 108, 131, 142, 174, 181
- Democratic process, 4
- Dewey, John, 246, 257
- Dewey, Thomas, 191, 216
- Dewsbury, E. M., 259

- Dictators, 170
 Discussion groups, 6, 109 ff.
 Discussion methods, 4, 33, 130 ff., 133 ff.
 Dissemination of ideas, 104
 Dix, Dorothy, 38
 Dodd, Stuart C., 246, 258
 Doob, Lawrence W., 5, 60, 127, 149, 151, 225, 246, 249
 Douglass, P. F., 249
 Droba, D. D., 258

 Editorials, 51 ff.
 Education, 96 ff., 107 ff., 130 ff., 150
 Elliott, Harrison S., 111, 253
 Ellwood, Charles A., 226, 248
 Eighteenth Amendment, 211, 219
 Engelbrecht, H. C., 255
 Ethics, 104
 Ethnic distance quotient, 199
 Ethnic distance scale, 122, 198
 Ewbank, H. L., 253
 Eysenck, H. J., 258

 Farnsworth, Paul R., 8, 247
 Fansler, Thomas, 110, 253
 Fickleness of public opinion, 136
 Fifteenth Amendment, 207
 Fifth Column, 14
 Forman, Henry J., 66
 Forums, 120
 Forums of the air, 81
 Fowler, B. B., 112
 France, 26
 Freedom of the press, 46
 Freedom of speech, 5
 Freudian school, 171

 Gallup, George, 187 ff., 258
 Garland, Jasper V., 113, 253
 General opinion, 15 ff.
 Generalities, 150, 157
 Giddings, Franklin H., 45
 Gjores, Axel, 112
 Godkin, E. L., 248
 Gossip, 36 ff., 46
 Governmental control, 94
 Graves, W. Brooke, 16, 34, 60, 97, 172, 187, 216, 246
 Great Books of Western Civilization, 116
 Group dynamics, 9
 Group morality, 23
 Groups, discussion, 6
 Groups, informal, 6
 Groups, primary, 6
 Grundtvig, Nicolai, 111
 Gullahorn, J. T., 256

 Hale, R. W., 254
 Hall, D. M., 117, 118
 Hall, L. K., 9
 Hall, O. M., 258
 Har, D. K., 260
 Harding, John, 25
 Haring, D. G., 248
 Hartman, D. A., 257
 Hartshorne, Hugh, 259
 Hayes, E. C., 47
 Haynes, Fred E., 139
 Hewitt, Dorothy, 111, 253
 Hill, Frank E., 113, 253
 Hitz, Shirley, 190
 Hogarth, William, 54
 Holaday, Perry W., 66
 Holger, Isager, 9, 254
 Hovland, Carl V., 8, 67, 258
 House of Representatives, 140
Human Relations, Journal of, 203
 Huxley, Aldous, 256
 Hyman, Herbert, 192

 Indoctrination, 102 ff., 200
 Informal group, 6
 Inglis, Ruth, 250
 Innovators of change, 129
 Insinuation, 160
 Interaction theory, 68
 International broadcasting, 91
 International motion pictures, 72
 International news, 50
 International radio, 85
 International university, 85
 Interviewers, 189
 Irion, Frederick G., 246, 248
 Irwin, W. H., 256

 Japanese, 212
 Japanese Americans, 212 ff.
 Jones, Marshall E., 252
 Journals of opinion, 58 ff.

 Kallen, H. M., 178, 257
 Kaltenborn, H. V., 77, 256
 Katz, Daniel, 258
 Kaufman, Felix, 227, 260

- Kendall, Patricia, 251
 Kent, Frank R., 217
 Kilpatrick, W. H., 121, 146, 167, 252
 Knapp, R. H., 39, 249
 Kornhauser, Arthur, 9, 246
- Landis, Paul H., 248
 Landon, Alfred, 187
 Language, 145
 LaPiere, Richard T., 8, 247, 249
 Lasker, Bruno, 122, 253, 256
 Lasswell, H. D., 247, 252, 256, 259
 Latin America, 72
 Law and public opinion, 17
 Laws, 17 ff.
 Laws of public opinion, 227 ff.
 Lazarsfeld, Paul F., 83, 248, 251, 259
 Lee, Alfred M., 10, 249, 256
 Legend, 153
 Legislation, 144
 Leupp, Francis E., 56, 249
 Levy, Bernard, 39
 Lewerenz, Alfred S., 259
 Lewin, Kurt, 9, 16, 95, 247
 Lindeman, E. C., 254
 Likert, Rensis, 192, 193, 201, 254, 259
 Lin Yutang, 250
 Lindesmith, A. R., 249, 252
 Link, H. C., 259
 Lippitt, Ronald, 9, 16, 247
 Lippmann, Walter, 7, 47, 53, 58, 60, 144, 153, 170, 247
 Listening-in groups, 81
Literary Digest poll, 187
 Loewenstein, Karl, 180
 Lord Haw-Haw, 86
 Lord Hee-Haw, 86
 Lowell, A. Lawrence, 247, 248, 255
 Lumley, Frederick E., 148, 149, 155, 256
 Lumsdaine, A. A., 8, 67, 258
- Macbeth, 126
 MacKenzie, A. J., 256
 Majority opinion, 11 ff.
 Majority vote, 186
 Manniche, Peter, 111
 Martian invasion, 87
 Mass media of communication, 94
 Mather, Kirtley, 111, 253
 May, Mark A., 67, 259
 McDonagh, E. C., 93, 259
 McKinley, William, 154
- McDougall, William, 18, 19, 21
 Measuring opinions, 194, 221
 Menefee, S. C., 249
 Merz, Charles, 73
 Miller, C. R., 33, 249, 252
 Minority opinion, 11 ff.
 Mims, Edward, 156, 260
 Morale, 24 ff., 27
 Morals, 21 ff.
 Mores, 22, 128
 Motion pictures, 62 ff.
 Motives, 19
 Murphy, Gardner, 201, 254, 259, 260
 Myth, 152
- Name calling, 150
 Nash, Vernon, 31
 Nast, Thomas, 54
 Nation, Carrie, 210
 National American Woman Suffrage Association, 207
 National Board of Review, 74, 75
 Nazis, 84, 86, 91
 Negro in films, 69
 Neumeyer, M. H., 85, 87, 92, 163
 New England town meeting, 109
 News, 43 ff.
 News broadcasts, 76
 Newscasts, 78
 Newspapers, 43 ff., 79, 116, 176
 Newsreels, 70
 Nickel, George D., 55
 Nineteenth Amendment, 208
 Nixon, R. B., 249
 Non-sequitur arguments, 161
 Northrop, F. S. C., 51
 Nova Scotia, 112
- Odegard, P. H., 260
 Odum, Howard W., 40, 249
 Ogle, M. B., Jr., 60, 247, 250, 251, 256
 Ohio Farm Bureau Cooperative Association, 113
 Opinion, coalition, 13 ff.
 Opinion, consensus, 13 ff.
 Opinion, general, 15
 Opinion, majority, 11 ff.
 Opinion, minority, 11
 Opinion, personal, 8, 10
 Opinion, preponderant, 16
 Opinion, private, 8, 11
 Opinion, public, 3 ff.
 Opinion-making process, 124 ff.

- Opinion sequences, 225
 Organized conversation, 32
 Orne, Anders, 112
 Orton, W., 250, 251
- Palmer, Paul A., 260
 Panels, 119, 120
 Park, Robert E., 250
 Partisanship, 14, 128, 129
 Paton, Alan, 60, 61
 Patriotism, 25
 Payne Fund Studies, 66
 Peatman, John S., 219
 Pemberton, H. Earl, 197, 259
 Personal conversation, 31 ff.
 Personal opinion, 8, 10
 Personal responsibility, 141
 Peters, C. C., 250
 Peterson, R. C., 251
 Plebiscite, 185
 Political propaganda, 87
 Political indoctrination, 103
 Polls, public opinion, 185 ff.
 Pope Gregory XV, 149
 Posters, 101, 102
 Postman, Leo, 38, 39
 Preponderant opinion, 16
 Pressure group, 158, 159
 Primary groups, 6
 Private opinion, 8
 Process, public-opinion, 124 ff.
 Prohibition movement, 209 ff.
 Propaganda, 70, 148 ff., 152, 169
 Propaganda Analysis Institute, 150, 151
 Propaganda density, 166
 Propaganda saturation, 166
 Propagandization, 129, 130
 Public censorship, 174
 Public opinion, defined, 3, 5
 Public opinion functions, 27
 Public opinion process, 20
Public Opinion Quarterly, 143
 Publicity, 96
 Publics, 7 ff.
- Racial tension areas, 201
 Radke, Marian, 95
 Radio, 76 ff.
 Radio advertising, 101
 Radio broadcasting, 80
 Radio control, 89
 Radio in wartime, 85
 Radio jamming, 84
 Radio news, 79
 Radio propaganda, 88
 Radio speakers, 81
 Radio sponsor, 89
 Rae, S. F., 187
 Reading circles, 115
 Reichenback, Harry, 98
 Reification, 146
 Religion and censorship, 179
 Rice, Stuart A., 259
 Riley, J. W., 93
 Rockefeller, John D., Sr., 97
 Rolo, Charles J., 85
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 26, 77, 187
 Rose, Arnold M., 259
 Rosebury, Dr. Theodor, 60
 Ross, Charles G., 218
 Ross, Edward A., 19, 47, 124, 125, 135, 138, 226, 254
 Round table, 119
 Ruttiger, K. F., 93
 Rumor, 39 ff.
- Salmon, Lucy M., 56, 168, 176, 250
 Sargent, S. Stansfield, 247, 257
 Schmid, Calvin F., 191, 247, 259
 Schall, H. M., 39
 Schools, 108
 Secret ballot, 186
 Semantics, 145
 Sentiment, 157
 "September Morn," 98
 Sheffield, Alfred W., 114
 Sheffield, Fred D., 8, 67, 253, 258
 Shuttleworth, F. K., 67
 Siepmann, Charles A., 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 251, 252
 Simpson, R. H., 253
 " Sleeper effects," 67
 Slogan, 154
 Smith, Bradford, 213
 Smith, Bruce L., 165
 Smith, Charles W., Jr., 60, 123, 247, 249, 250
 Social agencies, 20 ff.
 Social case analysis, 205, 206
 Social control, 142
Social Issues, Journal of, 203
 Social science, 143
 Social standards, 21 ff.
 Sorensen, R. C., 192
 Specific influence theory, 67, 68
 Speeches, campaign, 81

- Speier, Hans, 247
 Spender, Harold, 248
 Springarn, J. H., 259
 Standards, 21 ff.
 Stanton, Frank M., 83, 249
 Steele, A. T., 24
 St. Francis Xavier University, 112
 Stassen, Harold, 216
 Stereotype, 69
 Stowe, Harriet B., 60
 Strauss, A. L., 249, 252
 Study-action groups, 116
 Super, Donald E., 259
 Suppression of news, 49
 Sutherland, Edwin H., 255
 Sweden, 13, 112
 Symonds, Percival, 36

 Tabloid newspaper, 57
 Taboos, 16
 Table talk, 34 ff.
 Talk, 31 ff.
 Talk, organized, 80
 Tarde, Gabriel, 226
 Taylor, G. R., 146
 Teaching, 106 ff.
 Television, 92 ff.
 Testimonials, 151
 Thurstone, L. L., 198, 251
 Topical talk, 34
 Totalitarian countries, 18
 Town meeting, 109
 Tresselt, M. E., 39
 Truman, Harry S., 216 ff.
 Truth, 145
 Turner, R. H., 257

 United Nations, 91
 United States, 72, 73, 91, 166, 191,
 204, 207

 University of the air, 81

 Vargas, Getulio, 180
 Vaughan, W. F., 163, 257
 Villain in movies, 69
 Volstead Act, 18

 Walser, Frank, 117, 253
 Ward, Leo R., 113
 Wartime propaganda, 162
 Welles, Orson, 87
 Whispering campaign, 38 ff.
 White, R. K., 16
 Whitton, J. B., 255
 Wilhelm, Donald, 140
 Wilke, W. H., 78
 Willard, Frances E., 210
 Williams, B. H., 197, 248
 Williams, Chester, 111
 Williams, W. E., 113, 253
 Willkie, Wendell, 26, 60
 Wilson, Woodrow, 18
 Wirth, Louis, 247
 Woman suffrage, 206, 219
 Woodward, Julian L., 50
 Woodward, W. H., 146
 Woolston, H., 257
 World War I, 210, 212
 World War II, 56, 88, 162, 163, 204,
 212
 Workshops, 121
 Wright, Quincy, 164
 Wrigley, Jr., William, 97

 Young, Kimball, 44, 247, 257
 Youngman, R. M., 127

 Znaniecki, Florian, 226, 227, 260

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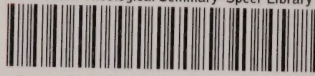
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